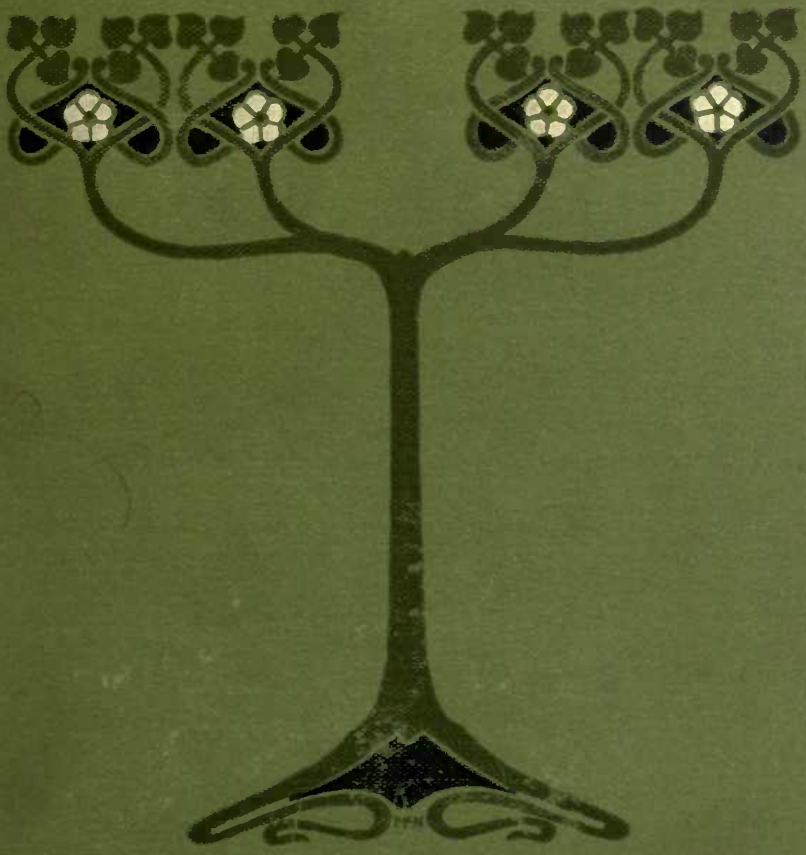
WHAT HAPPENED TO BARBARA



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WHAT HAPPENED TO BARBARA

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BY

OLIVE THORNE MILLER

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WHAT HAPPENED TO BARBARA

WHAT HAPPENED TO BARBARA

CHAPTER I

BARBARA'S RASH PROMISE

"Is n't that lovely!"

"Where did it come from?"

"Who made it?"

This confusion of tongues greeted Barbara as she opened the schoolroom door one morning. She drew near the group to see the wonder that excited them, when another voice arose — that of Jenny Mills — saying exultantly: —

"It came from New York, and there is n't one in town like it, and I don't believe there 's any one that can make one!"

Barbara came hastily near and was greeted with a shout.

"Come, Barbara! see this lovely basket!

Do you know how it 's made ? " for Barbara was handy at making fancy things.

" Humph ! " said Jenny with scorn. " I 'd like to see her make one ! "

Barbara had never seen one before, but it looked easy enough. She could n't bear to fall below the expectations of her schoolmates, and she resented Jenny's tone, and in fact some sudden impulse — perhaps vanity — made her say instantly : —

" Pooh ! anybody can make one of those ! Is that the great thing you were all talking about ? "

" Can you do it ? Oh, make me one ! " was the cry that now burst upon her.

" She can't do it ; she 's only bragging," said Jenny's exasperating voice.

" I can do it," she asserted proudly.

" Oh, please," pleaded the voice of her warmest friend, a girl younger than herself who clung to her like a worshiper, " please make one for me ! "

" She can't do it ; she dare n't try," said Jenny again.

"I can do it, Dora," said Barbara quietly, "and I will."

"Let's see it, won't you?" sneered Jenny.

"Yes, Dora, you 'll show it to them when it 's done, won't you?"

"Yes, indeed!" said Dora loyally, "and it 'll be prettier than that one, I know!"

At this moment the bell rang and the girls separated to their seats.

Barbara was very happy in this school, which was what was called a Select School, of not more than forty or fifty girls. It was held in one large room with a single row of desks all around next the wall.

Nearly everything about it was pleasant to Barbara. She liked the teacher, and she liked her studies, but the dearest of all to her was a little secret society of half a dozen of her most intimate friends who had united themselves together for the purpose of indulging their love for writing. Who started it has long been forgotten, but as two of the party became well-known writers at a later day, it is to be supposed that one of them formed it.

In this little society each girl assumed a character either from history or from a favorite romance, or a purely imaginary one. This fictitious personage chose her residence in some foreign country and pretended to write all her letters from there, trying in every way to act the character she had chosen.

One of the girls, for instance, took the name of a favorite young girl in Scott's novels, and dated her letters in the Highlands of Scotland; another became a princess of France and wrote the most wonderful stories of life in a royal palace; a third buried herself in the woods and wrote hermit letters from there.

All letters were passed to each of the circle to read.

In this way Barbara indulged her passion for letter-writing, and after she had used up her too limited paper she would fill her slate, and when a good chance offered, pass it around to be read, then wash it off and fill it again. Behind the big geographies of those days many an hour was spent in this dear pleasure.

On the day my story begins, after the ex-

citement about the basket and Jenny's taunts were over, Barbara's heart was rather heavy, for she had never seen a basket like that, and she had promised to make one. She would not fail for anything, and thus not only disappoint Dora's trusting heart but bring down the sneers of Jenny and the rest. The thing had been made by hands, and she was resolved to make one like it, if it took a year. It must be prettier, too, to justify Dora's faith.

The basket was to hang on the wall to hold letters or cards. It was made of two colors of paper woven together as the kindergarten children nowadays weave mats. Then it was bound together, had tassels at the corners and a curiously braided band to hang it by.

Such a thing would be very commonplace now, but in those days it was new and pretty. It looked easy, but let me tell you what a time Barbara had learning to make one.

Jenny's basket was of blue and white paper, but Barbara resolved that Dora's should be of gilt and silver paper, that being the most gorgeous thing she could think of.

When she got home from school Barbara went to the drawer where she kept her treasures and opened a little box containing her small savings. Girls did not have much money in those days, and such a thing as an allowance to spend as she pleased Barbara had never heard of. She looked at the little pile of pennies and half-dimes with a sigh. She had set her heart on a certain purchase for examination day at the close of the school, and she had denied herself candy and gum-mastic and "acid," of which girls used to buy five cents' worth at the drug-stores and dissolve on the tongue — a strange fancy which I am surprised their parents allowed. Still she had managed to save little more than a dollar.

She felt very unhappy, but there was no other way, the money must go. She took out sixty cents and went to the bookstore, where she bought a sheet of gilt and another of silver paper, for in those days they cost thirty cents apiece. Of course it was much more than was needed for the basket — she said to herself — but she could make other things with it.

When Barbara reached home she went to her own room and locked the door, having first slipped a pair of her mother's scissors into her pocket.

She opened the paper and cut off a square she thought big enough. Of course she should have practiced on common paper, or at least measured and cut it out with extreme care. But she did not know anything about this sort of work, and she had to learn on the costly paper how to do it.

The weaving was of alternate strips of the two papers, so she cut a number of strips of the proper width and length, and tried to weave them together. First she laid down side by side all the gold strips and then tried to weave in the silver.

Fancy the trouble she had! She would get one strip woven in, but the moment she began the next, the first one would slip out. All the first afternoon she wasted trying to do it in that way.

The next morning at school she was greeted with shouts of "Have you brought the bas-

ket?" "Let's see your wonderful basket!" etc.

Barbara didn't feel quite so confident as the day before, but she was not going to be sneered out of it, so she answered carelessly: —

"I didn't have time to make it last night."

Jenny laughed insultingly.

"Oh, if you're in a hurry, Miss Mills," said Barbara loftily, "you can wait till your hurry is over; it isn't for you!"

All day that basket weighed on her mind, and at night she tried a new way. When she had woven the first strip in, she stuck a pin straight down through every cross strip into the table it lay on. That held it, and though it was extremely awkward handling it, she managed to weave in all the strips for one side, holding them in place by a bristling army of pins.

Then she noticed with horror that as she had not cut her strips exactly, there were gaps and places where they did not fit properly. This would never do; she saw that she must begin again. So passed the second day.

The second morning the laughs of the enemy were louder, and the voices of her friends fainter, but she made some excuse, and spent another day thinking about it.

The third night she cut new strips by help of a ruler, and saw with dismay that her two sheets would not be enough to complete the dreadful thing. The third morning her friends said nothing, but looked with wistful eyes at her empty hands, while her enemies met her with shouts as far off as they could see her.

"Where's the basket?" "Hope you brought that basket!" "We're dying to see that basket!" and other schoolgirlish remarks meant to be ironical and crushing.

She answered back bravely, though her heart was heavy.

That day she began to fail in recitation. Her teacher spoke sharply to her, which nearly broke her heart, for she was proud of her standing in school, and to be reproved was only a little less mortifying to her than to be marked less than perfect. How could she

study with that horrid basket like a nightmare before her!

The fourth night she wove the two sides and left them pinned to her table, for she did not dare unpin them till she had contrived some way to hold the strips in place, and only now discovered that she should have woven them wrong side out so that she could have pasted them firmly on the back.

The fourth morning her friends looked the other way, except dear trusting Dora, who clung to her as usual, and the enemy taunted her unmercifully.

"I can do it and I will!" said Jenny, mocking her tone and manner. "Pooh! anybody can do that!" repeated Jenny's great friend, and so they went on. I need n't tell you girls the various ways in which one can manage to distress and annoy another.

This day she failed worse than ever in lessons and went home in disgrace.

The fifth evening she managed to unpin and gum in place the two woven pieces so that they looked tolerably well, and to bind the

edges in a somewhat clumsy way, with a broad strip of the gilt paper.

The fifth morning was a repetition of the fourth as to treatment, only her friends now said openly they did not believe she could do it. She was much shaken by her worry and the girls' treatment. She seemed unable to understand the simplest question in her books; she simply could not fix her mind on them. Her teacher was grieved and kept her after school to talk to her seriously.

She could only cry and feel utterly broken down, but she would not tell what was the matter, nor would she give up trying to make that basket. She must succeed now or be set down as a liar, and I think she would have died before she would fail.

The sixth evening she struggled with fastening the two sides together, which she accomplished in a tolerably neat way, and began attempts on the braided strip to hang it up by.

By this time the family had become interested in her strange, secret ways; she kept her door locked; she spent every moment out

of school in her room; she would not let any one in; she always came home with red eyes; she could not eat or sleep. Her brother teased unmercifully about her wonderful secret; he declared she was writing a book; he examined her fingers for ink spots; he called her "blue-stocking;" he pretended to read notices out of the newspapers about the celebrated authoress. She was nearly wild.

Now came Sunday. She did not dream of being so wicked as to touch her work on that day, and went to church and Sunday-school as usual.

The sixth morning she heard the word she dreaded unspeakably. "Liar!" was first spoken by Jenny and then shouted at her by Jenny's friends.

"I do not wish to speak to a liar!" said one, turning away from her.

"My mother will not allow me to associate with untruthful persons!" said another with pursed-up lips. All turned their backs on her except faithful Dora, who clung to her though weeping. At recess no one would speak to

her; at noon, when all brought lunch and usually ate it socially and had fine games after it, the girls gathered in groups, talking in low tones, except when they wished to fling a word at her or make a remark to another about her, or *at* her — you know how.

As for Barbara, she never left her desk; she had brought no lunch; she bent over her geography, and pretended not to hear anything.

That day her distressed teacher kept her again, and after trying in vain to induce her to tell the truth, said she should have to send a note to her parents, and she kept her while she wrote it, and gave it to her to deliver.

Why did she put such a dreadful temptation before the tortured girl? All the long way home Barbara battled with herself about delivering that note, and she ended — so far had her thoughtless boasting brought her — by tearing it to bits.

The seventh evening she completed the braided band to hang the basket by and fastened it on. Now only remained the tassels, and she hoped one day more would end it.

She was tempted that day to play truant, but she could not bear that her enemies should think they had driven her away, so she took her place as usual. That dreadful day her dear Dora, whose trusting faith when every one else had doubted her had helped very much to keep her up, was absent. No one condescended to tell her why, for now she was let severely alone, the worst punishment possible for schoolgirls to inflict. She was an outcast!

Her teacher asked her if she had brought an answer to her note, and Barbara told her "no," though she felt sure her teacher must know from her guilty looks the truth. She could not recite; she was almost unconscious of what was going on about her.

At noon her teacher talked to her again and told her she thought she should have to expel her, — such complete failure in lessons, such obstinate refusal to explain; she could not have such an example before the others; it was affecting the scholarship of the school; and in fact she should go and talk to her parents that afternoon. As for Barbara, she

told her she might go home then; it was worse than useless for her to stay there. She told her besides to take her books with her.

Utterly heart-broken and crushed, Barbara gathered up her books and left the school where she had been so happy. Her whole life seemed spoiled. She was disgraced; dismissed from school with the name of liar fastened upon her. She dragged herself home, with a splitting headache, slipped into the side door, and stole up to her room without being seen by anybody; and then — though she could not keep the tears from rolling over her cheeks — she would not give up till she had finished the last tassel and hung the hated thing upon the wall.

"They may hate me and dismiss me and kill me if they like," was her wild cry as she threw herself on the bed, "but they shall *never* call me a liar again."

Now she gave up to her grief; she cried and sobbed and could not stop; she shivered and then burned, and in fact, though she did not know it, she was in a raging fever.

Meanwhile the hours flew by, and at the hour when she should have come from school, her mother was startled to see the teacher instead. The whole shameful story was told. Her mother was grieved and shocked, but when the fact came out that Barbara had started for home at noon, she was seriously alarmed.

The whole family was questioned, but no one had seen her, and her father was sent for. It was feared that she had run away, or thrown herself into the lake, as she had sometimes threatened when she was angry.

Fortunately she was found before the public search began, but even then her mother was not at rest, for Barbara's face was burning and she was in a high fever and hardly knew what she said.

"There it is!" she cried as she opened the door at her father's stern command, and pointed to the basket hanging on the wall; "there's the hateful thing!" she went on wildly, "that's the cause of all the trouble! but it is done and they shall *never* call me liar again!" and she laughed — a laugh

that was like that of a maniac. The whole family crowded into the room, surprised and alarmed.

"What does all this mean?" demanded her father.

"Miss Grey knows!" she screamed, "but perhaps she won't tell, for she hates me and she's going to expel me! I wish I was dead!" she added.

"Clear the room!" said her father. "Ned, go for the doctor! The child doesn't know what she's saying! There's something more here than appears. I shall sift this to the bottom."

The room was cleared, except of her mother, who made her go to bed, calmed and soothed her till the doctor came, who gave her a sleeping dose, and the next week or two was ever a blank in her memory.

Meanwhile, by close inquiry among the girls at school, with the clues Barbara gave in her raving, the whole truth came out, and Miss Grey, holding the finished basket in her hand, had given the girls a lecture they never forgot

on the vice of boasting and the crime of torturing another.

During the days Barbara's life was in danger, gloom hung over the school, where she had many true friends in spite of the way they had treated her when they thought her untruthful; and when she was pronounced convalescent they came in a body to see her, though they were not allowed to do so, for she was too weak to endure it.

They loaded her with flowers, however, every day lovely fresh bouquets, and she rapidly recovered, though her not very strong constitution had received a great shock.

CHAPTER II

BARBARA'S HOME

I MUST tell you how it was that Barbara's happiest times were at school; it was because she was not happy at home.

She had a pleasant home and a loving father and mother, but when she was about ten years old — long before this story begins — something happened that made her very unhappy, though it was all because of a mistake. This thing was the coming to live in her home of an aunt and a cousin two or three years older than herself.

When Barbara heard that she was going to have a playmate she was delighted, for she had no sister and had always longed for one. She went at once to prepare for the great event; her dolls and their clothes were put in order; her playhouse in the attic was thoroughly cleaned, and a thousand questions were asked about the newcomer.

She learned that the cousin, Janet, though a little older than herself, would doubtless — her mother thought — like to play with dolls; of course she would go to school, and Barbara was warned to be very kind to her because she had no father.

Barbara was prepared to welcome her warmly as a sister when Janet and her mother arrived. Disappointments began the first hour. Janet declined Barbara's invitation to go and look at a new brood of chickens, and when Barbara offered to show her her dolls, she said primly that she did n't care for dolls.

This was a great blow to Barbara, for she lived in her world of dolls. They were to her society and the playmates she was too shy to seek, for she was born the most diffident of girls, and had not yet made the school acquaintances spoken of in the previous chapter.

This blow was only the first; it turned out that Janet was different from Barbara in all her tastes and her ways. She was a prim little personage who never soiled her hands or mussed her clothes. She had no childish tastes,

and she did not go to school, but had lessons with her mother at home. She preferred to be dressed and stay with her mother and aunt in the house, while Barbara roamed the place, spent hours in the orchard, and loved nothing better than to take a book and climb into the haymow where no one could find her, and she could read in peace and comfort. To be dressed in clothes of which she must be careful was torture to Barbara, and to sit in the parlor and look at stupid books on the centre table tired her dreadfully. The two girls could not have differed more if they had been of different races instead of near relations.

Barbara was sadly disappointed, — as I said, — but perhaps that would not have had much effect on her but for two things. First, the two mothers, hoping to have their daughters friends, decided to dress them alike, — a custom in those days. This was a most unfortunate plan for Barbara, for in her free-and-easy out-door ways she soiled and tore her clothes, while Janet, always primly in the house, kept hers in perfect trim. In order to

keep the two always dressed alike it was therefore necessary to provide Barbara with two dresses and two aprons to Janet's one, and what was worse gave Janet a chance to compare herself with her careless cousin.

"Auntie," she would say with prim little lips, "see how dirty Barbara has got her apron! Mine, you see, is quite clean."

This would draw a gentle reproof from her mother.

"And see her hair!" Janet would go on, encouraged; "there 's hay on her head; she 's been in the barn! Is n't the barn a very dirty place?"

"Barbara," her mother would say gently, "you know I don't like you to climb up on the hay; I'm afraid you 'll fall and get hurt."

Then Janet, having got Barbara into disgrace, would look so very meek and virtuous that Barbara would have to run out of doors to keep from calling her names or even striking her.

The consequence of all this was that Barbara was constantly reproved by her too gen-

tle mother. And there was still worse; Janet being older and dependent upon Barbara's father, Barbara's unselfish mother seemed to make more of her than of her own daughter. Reproaching herself that she could not love Janet much, she tried to make up for it by lavishing more upon her than upon her own. When presents were given Janet always had a little more, a little better, than Barbara.

When Barbara complained that this was unfair, as she did at first, her mother replied, "But it's because she is older than you, dear; and besides she is our guest, and we always give the best to our guest."

This did not seem fair to Barbara, and though she did not say any more about it, she laid it up in her heart, and made up her mind that her own mother did not love her.

If she had been less shy and had told her mother the dreadful thing she was thinking, all would have been made clear to her; but she never spoke of it. She brooded over it day by day, growing all the time more reserved, more sure that she was right, and of

course more unhappy. She never thought of asking advice or help in anything; she lived in her father's house almost like a stranger, perfectly sure that no one at home loved her or cared for her.

One confidant, one comfort, she had,—her journal. Into that she poured all the feelings she hid from the world, and being fond of writing she filled pages every night after she had gone to her room to go to bed.

The journal at last made serious trouble. One day, not long before my story begins, Barbara accidentally left unlocked the drawer where she kept the precious volume. Janet in her prying way got hold of it, and partly read it. She had hardly chance to do more than glance at it when Barbara was at school, looking out of the window every minute to see if she was coming.

She read enough, however, to make her very angry, and when Barbara came home she found a storm raging,—Janet more prim than usual, quite pleased to have made a sensation, her own mother in distress, and Aunt Jane in

tears, declaring that she could not stay where her fatherless child was hated.

Barbara was met by reproving words from her mother, and when she learned that all this commotion was because Janet had read her journal and told what she remembered, or thought she remembered, she was furious at first, charging Janet with stealing her book; and then — when Janet in turn got angry and told more and more things she said she had seen in the book — Barbara boldly declared she was a liar.

Then when her father came upon the scene and tried to get at the truth, for Janet made assertions which Barbara indignantly denied, he said at last something that sent Barbara to her room like a flash: "The only way we can get at the truth is to have the journal read."

Have it read! her inmost thoughts! her most secret hopes and wishes read to the family! — she would die first!

She hurried out of the room, ran like a mad creature to her bureau, which she found with the key in the lock, snatched the fatal book,

rushed down the back stairs, tearing off the heavy covers as she went, and stuffed it into the kitchen stove, poking it in and watching to see that every word was burned, paying no heed — if she even heard — to the warning of the maid, who declared she would set the house on fire. It tore her very heart to do this; it was like burning a part of herself; but she was in such a rage of terror and fury that she hardly knew what she was doing, and when it was ended she rushed back to her room and flung herself on the bed, sobbing bitterly.

She was aroused by her father's voice, very stern: —

"Daughter! come down and bring the journal!"

"I can't!" cried Barbara; "it's all burnt up!"

"What?" cried her father.

"I've burnt it up," sobbed Barbara. "You may kill me now — but no one shall *ever* read it!"

"Kill you?" said her father more gently. "What do you mean?"

Barbara was in such a rage that her diffidence slipped away from her, and for once she spoke her inmost heart.

"I know you and mother don't love me!" she burst out in hot words; "you love Janet best and she 's lied about me, and you believe her — 'n' I wish I was dead! 'n' I 'll run away 'n' never come back — I will! I will!"

Barbara was never in such a passion before or after, for her parents, shocked by this revelation of her feelings, hushed the matter up and made much of her. But she was not to be petted out of the belief she had taken into her heart, — that Janet was loved and she was not.

Her unhappiness at home — as I said — was the reason that Barbara loved school where she could forget Janet and her own misery. And this was why the trouble over that foolish basket was so hard to bear.

CHAPTER III

UNCLE KARL

WHILE Barbara after her illness was still creeping around the house, pale and thin, without much of her old liveliness, they were one day surprised by a visit from Uncle Karl. This favorite artist uncle lived away off in the West and not often got so far from home.

"Why, Barbara!" he said when he met her, "what's the matter with you? Where are the rosy cheeks and bright eyes you had the last time I saw you?"

Barbara did not reply; she could not speak; the loving tone brought the ready tears to her eyes, and her mother answered, "Barbara has been ill, and is just getting well."

"Well; I'll tell you what, Sister Mary; you must let her go home with me! We don't have any pale cheeks out in Minnesota! I'll send her back rosy and gay as a lark! Will

you go, girlie?" turning to Barbara, who had brightened at the thought.

"Oh, I should love to go," she said eagerly, for there was nothing she liked much better than traveling, and no one on earth that she loved better than Uncle Karl.

"Why!" said her mother, moved by Barbara's eager looks, "I don't know but it would be a good thing for her; we've been thinking she would be better for a change."

"Then it's settled!" said Uncle Karl gayly. "Run and pack up your duds, girlie; we'll be off to-morrow."

"Oh, no, indeed!" said her mother, "she can't get off so soon as that — and besides, I'll have to talk to her father."

Barbara's face fell, but Uncle Karl encouraged her. "I'll talk to Brother James myself; and I'll wait a few days for her, though you must n't forget, Sister Mary, that we live in the backwoods and she won't need any finery."

"I thought you lived in a village!" said Barbara's mother doubtingly.

"We do, of course!" Uncle Karl hastened to explain, "but it's in the Far West, you know, and what you down-easters consider the woods."

"Oh, I hope there are woods!" Barbara put in earnestly.

"There are — close by; you'll have woods enough, I promise you."

"Oh, mother!" wailed Barbara, "do let me go! I *never* lived near the woods — and I want to so much!"

Her mother noticed the color in Barbara's cheeks, the brightness of her eyes, and made up her mind that the change was the very thing for her. That evening she talked to her husband, and it was settled that Barbara should go home with Uncle Karl.

"But," said Barbara's mother in talking it over the next morning, "what will Sister Betty say about it? How will she like an uninvited guest?"

"She'll be delighted, I know," said Uncle Karl, "and besides, Barbara'll be *my* guest, and live in the studio with me."

Barbara's mother looked surprised, and he went on — laughing: —

"Oh, she 'll sleep and eat in the house, of course, and no doubt her aunt 'll train her in housekeeping ways — she 's a famous housekeeper, you know," with a droll look that Barbara understood later; "but all the same, I consider myself responsible for the red cheeks and bright eyes I promised, and my studio is the finest place in the world for just such girlies as Barbara. She 'll help me in lots of ways, too," he added, as he noticed the eager look in Barbara's eyes and the doubting one in her mother's.

The next few days were a busy whirl in the house. A traveling-dress had to be made, and various other things got ready before the trunk was really packed.

A queer little old-fashioned thing was this trunk, covered with horse-hide with the hair left on, and ornamented with a great display of brass-headed nails. This was Barbara's first journey without her mother, when she had a trunk to herself; and great was the excitement

of packing it. It was packed and unpacked at least a dozen times before it was really locked and corded, and a neat card with Barbara's name, written in her father's plainest hand, tacked on where no careless baggageman could fail to see it.

At last the day of starting came, and Barbara, with a brighter look already on her face, said good-by to the family, and began her journey with Uncle Karl to the Far West.

All this was a good many years ago, and they did not take the cars and whirl across the country as you would now; a journey was a very different affair in those days, and it took several days and nights of travel to reach Minnesota.

The first part of the journey was to Buffalo by the Erie Canal, which ran through New York State to the Great Lakes. Before they began their boat journey there was a fifty-mile ride and an over-Sunday visit to a cousin in the city through which the canal ran.

This ride was for the most part through the open country with one small bit of woods about

the middle of the way. It was the custom for travelers to take their own lunch to eat on the way, and when it was known that Barbara was going to that unknown region the Far West, and no one could tell when she would come back, — if indeed she ever did, — her schoolgirl friends, feeling very guilty about the way they had treated her, had a strong desire to make amends to her in some way, to show her that their old love for her was not dead.

Saying nothing to one another, each girl began to plan how she could show this, and queerly enough it happened that the same idea occurred to several with a funny result.

CHAPTER IV

A FUNNY LUNCH

It happened in this way: On that Saturday morning when Barbara and Uncle Karl started on their long journey, they were provided at home with a nice luncheon, packed in a box under the seat of the carriage.

Hardly had they turned the corner when they passed the house of Nelly Hanford, and there she stood at the gate with a big package in her hands. Seeing the carriage, she ran out and motioned them to stop. The driver drew up his horses, and Nelly came out to the carriage.

"Barbara," she said, half bashfully, at the same time handing up the package, "I 'm sorry you 're going away; please take this to eat on the way."

Barbara was about to explain that they had already more than they could eat, but Uncle Karl spoke: —

"Thank you; it was kind of you to think of us," and took the package.

When they had passed on, Barbara said, "Why, Uncle Karl, mother put up more than we can eat!"

He replied, "I know it, girlie; but you would n't hurt the feelings of your friend by refusing what gives her so much pleasure to offer!"

Barbara had n't thought of that, but she thanked Uncle Karl for thinking for her.

Her gravity was, however, severely tried at the next corner, where Mamy Field was lying in wait for them, with a box neatly tied up with a ribbon. This she offered with blushes and a stammering word of how sorry she was that Barbara was going away, and a hope that she would like what she had put up.

Hard as it was to keep from laughing, Barbara thanked her, and they passed on. Half-way down the street lived Jenny Green, and as they came in sight Barbara cried: —

"There 's Jenny Green! Uncle Karl, do

you suppose—" and there came from Sam the driver a low "Golly! here's another!"

Sure enough; Jenny stopped them and offered a small basket, while Barbara nearly choked trying to keep a sober face and thank her properly.

But that was not the end. While Barbara was struggling with her emotions, Sam broke out with:—

"Je-ru-sa-lem! still they come!" and drew up beside Kate Wilson, who stood smiling and holding up a pretty box.

"I thought—" she began, "I made some cookies this morning—and I thought you might like some for lunch in the woods."

"Oh, thank you, Kate!" said Barbara with shining eyes. "I'm sure we shall enjoy them—I like cookies ever so much!"

"I'm so sorry you're going away," said Kate earnestly. "I do hope you'll come back soon!"

Seeing how hard Barbara found it to say anything, Uncle Karl came to the rescue, and said heartily:—

"I mean to bring her back a good deal rosier than she is now. Good-morning!" and away they went.

In a moment or two came another low explosion from the astonished driver.

"Gee-whillikens! if there ain't another! Do they think we're an orphan asylum?" and he stopped again while Mate Durgin offered her package, and Barbara choked and gasped and got red in the face, while Uncle Karl blandly thanked the rather surprised giver.

Barbara was still almost convulsed when Sam broke out again.

"Now see here, mister! I shall have to take to the back streets — this is cruelty to animals! Have n't they any mercy on my horses?" and he drew up beside the walk to receive a box from Jane Carter, which Uncle Karl accepted with thanks, while Barbara buried her face in her handkerchief and appeared to be convulsed with emotion, — as indeed she was; but not tears, as Jane supposed.

Hastily Sam started up his horses, and Uncle

Karl said, "Do many more of your friends live on this street, girlie? If so, I think we better try another — or, Sam," as a new thought struck him, "could n't you look the other way and not see them? This is getting serious!"

"'Deed, sir," said Sam, turning around to answer, "they all looks so pretty and pleadin', I hain't the heart to disapp'int 'em!"

Barbara was past speaking to her friends as one after another stopped the carriage and offered her package. She kept her face buried in her handkerchief, and Uncle Karl had to do all the talking, and indeed he was getting rather anxious about Barbara, who was still weak, and did n't seem able to control herself.

But as long as they were passing through this part of the town, package and box and basket followed one another, and were added to the pile on the bottom of the carriage, which Uncle Karl kept carefully covered with the carriage robe, not to embarrass the eager givers.

When at last they had left the town behind

them and were nearing the woods, Barbara no longer tried to smother her laugh, but had it out, and Uncle Karl joined heartily, joking Barbara about her appetite and making that drive a very jolly one.

When they reached a brook about half-way through the woods, they stopped to take their lunch, and Sam prepared the noon feed for the horses, asking Barbara if he had n't better offer them bread and butter, while Uncle Karl brought out the packages and Barbara laid them on the grass and opened them. They held almost every kind of dainty known to schoolgirls. Nelly Hanford had sensibly brought chicken sandwiches; Mamy Field's box held cake and a pot of jam; Jenny Green's contained hard-boiled eggs and pickles; Mate Durgin contributed doughnuts and cheese.

There were tarts and pastries of various kinds, and candies, and preserves, and in fact goodies enough to have feasted a mob of schoolgirls.

When the whole was laid out, Uncle Karl looked on with dismay, while Barbara had a

fit of laughing that ended in hysterical sobs, and Sam filled the air with roars of laughter.

When they had calmed down and eaten as much as they could, Barbara having tasted of each thing so as to enjoy the contribution of each friend, the next thing was what to do with it all; how to dispose of it in such a way as not to hurt the feelings of the givers by letting them hear of it.

Several plans were discussed, and no way out of the dilemma reached, till Uncle Karl, noticing a rather eager look on Sam's face, had a bright thought.

"Sam," he said, "do you know any big family to whom all these nice things would be acceptable and who would n't know where they came from?"

"Why!" said Sam, scratching his head, a little embarrassed, "I don't know any bigger lot of young-ones than lives in my own cabin — 'n' if young missy really wants to get rid of 'em, — quiet like, — why, I 'll be glad to relieve her of 'em — an' nothin' said." So it was arranged, and when Sam drove back to his

home that evening he surprised his wife and delighted his six children with such a supper as they never had before.

And he kept his word about telling. Not even his wife knew where he had found such a treasure. He always said he found it in the woods, and his wife supposed it was left there by some picnic party.

But the memory of it always caused Uncle Karl and Barbara, whenever they thought of it, such hearty laughs that Uncle Karl declared that schoolgirl lunch did more to bring Barbara back to health than anything else.

CHAPTER V

ON A CANAL BOAT

After a quiet Sunday spent with the cousin, Uncle Karl and Barbara made their way to the dock where lay the canal boat ready to be off.

It was a queer-looking, squatty sort of a boat with a flat roof not much above the tow-path. They stepped over the low railing on the side, and went down a few steps into the cabin, to deposit their hand baggage.

Barbara looked around with surprise, wondering where they were to sleep and eat, for the whole inside was one long narrow room, with seats built along both sides. There were a good many passengers, and Barbara drew back.

"Why, Uncle Karl!" she whispered, "where shall I put my things? Where am I going to sleep?"

"You 'll see," said Uncle Karl with twinkling eyes. "This is a sort of india-rubber con-

cern ; it 'll stretch out for a dinner-table, and beds 'll grow along the sides. Put your things on the side bench and come on deck, that 's the place to be ; we 'll stay in here only to eat and sleep."

Somewhat reassured, though still wondering, Barbara obeyed, and soon they were seated on chairs on top of the boat, the horses had started up the tow-path, and they were slowly moving.

"There ! is n't this fine ?" asked Uncle Karl as they passed street after street. "We 'll soon be out of the city and then we 'll have the lovely country to look at ; this beats the stage all hollow !"

"It 's awful nice," said Barbara, "but I don't see — "

"Of course you don't," interrupted her uncle ; "but take my word for it, you 'll find it all right and comfortable. We 're going to live in this boat two or three days, you know ; we have more than two hundred miles to ride on it, and we shall see all the towns and the fields and the woods between here and Buffalo,

and I don't know any state prettier to ride through than old New York. Don't you worry, girlie; I came down this way, and I know."

A little comforted, though still wondering how it could possibly be, Barbara settled herself to enjoy the landscape.

By this time they had passed the last street and were going through gardens and past country houses, and before long they came to the real country. Best of all, in an hour or two they passed through a beautiful piece of real woods, — tall old trees near together, the ground under them covered with fallen leaves and mosses and ferns, where many little flowery-looking plants were growing — one of the loveliest spots in the world to Barbara.

How she longed to go into them and gather moss and ferns and perhaps flowers, and how eagerly she listened to her uncle, who told her about the country near his home where they were going!

Their talk was interrupted by the ringing of a big bell at the cabin door.

"That's supper," said Uncle Karl; "let's go down."

Down they went, and to Barbara's amazement the cabin was filled its whole length and width with a table loaded with supper. There was just room to slip in beside it, and the benches on the side were the seats provided. The first comers passed to the end, and as others came in they took the seats remaining; no one could pass another.

Barbara and her uncle took seats together, and soon were fully occupied with the meal. The food was all on the table, for no waiter could pass around it, and every one had to help himself.

If one seated along in the middle of the table finished his supper before the others, he could not leave the table, but was obliged to wait till those nearest the end had left the way open.

After supper they went again on deck, and Barbara was full of questions.

"Uncle Karl, where did that long table come from?"

"It was all in pieces, and packed away somewhere," said Uncle Karl, "and you 'll see more wonders at bedtime; but now see, we 're going through a lock!"

"What 's a lock?" asked Barbara.

"It 's where the canal has to go to lower ground; you see it can't go down hill like a road, for the water would all run away, so it has to go down steps; you 'll see how we manage it."

Indeed, Barbara was looking eagerly, for the boat had got into a sort of box not much larger than itself, and great gates were shut behind it, so that it could n't move forward or back. Then it began to sink, and Barbara cried out in terror.

"We 're sinking, Uncle Karl!"

"Yes," said Uncle Karl calmly, "we sink a little way to the level of the next piece of the canal."

Down, down they went, till the deck was on a level with the ground; still lower, till it was far below, and they were hemmed in by the dripping sides of their box-like prison.

Barbara was alarmed; it did look dangerous.

"Oh, Uncle Karl!" she cried, "we shall be drowned!"

"No, indeed, girlie! don't worry! that's the way a boat has to go downstairs."

Sure enough, in another moment, the end of the box at the front end of the boat began slowly to open, so that one could see it was formed of big gates. The water rushed out and the boat slowly moved on. Barbara drew a sigh of relief. They had taken a long step down and now came out into a pretty country, and Barbara was again happy.

It was a beautiful moonlight night and the boat was passing through woods, which so delighted Barbara that she could n't bear to go to bed. But about ten o'clock they came to a town, and then she found herself very sleepy, and was glad to go below again.

When they opened the door to the cabin, Barbara stood amazed. This surely was not the place where they had eaten supper! A row of rather wide shelves lined each side of the

room, leaving only a passage between. Before these shelves were curtains, and about halfway down, another curtain stretched across, dividing the cabin into two rooms. Not a person was to be seen.

"Oh, Uncle Karl!" gasped Barbara.

Uncle Karl laughed.

"Now, you see, girlie," he said quietly, "I told you that beds grew on the sides; beyond that curtain is the ladies' bedroom, and this side is the men's bedroom."

"But where are all the folks?" asked Barbara, dismayed.

"Gone to bed, I guess," said Uncle Karl, "and I must hunt up somebody to show you your berth."

At that moment a man's head was thrust out between the curtains, and Barbara shrank back.

"Oh, uncle! must I sleep on one of those shelves," she whispered, almost in tears. "I 'd rather stay on deck all night."

"Well, I would n't," said Uncle Karl, "and you 'll find it not so bad; it 's a good deal better than the feather beds we find

sometimes. Besides, it 's the only bed you 'll have for several nights, remember."

At this moment a colored woman appeared, who told Barbara she would show her where to go. With a rather tearful good-night kiss Barbara left Uncle Karl and followed the woman to the ladies' cabin behind the curtain. There she pointed to a berth neatly made up, on which lay Barbara's traveling-bag and other things.

"That 's your berth," she said.

Barbara looked with dismay; it was the upper shelf, and a woman and baby were already asleep in the lower one.

"But how can I get up there?" she cried.

"Can't you climb, miss?" said the stewardess scornfully. "I reckon you can git up if you try hard enough." Then, seeing that Barbara was almost in tears, she relented. "You just put your foot on the edge of the lower berth, and there you are!"

Suddenly remembering how many trees she had climbed not so long ago, Barbara thought she could manage it.

"But," she said, looking around, "where shall I undress, and where shall I put my clothes?"

"Seems to me you 're rather notional," said the woman. "You 're 'most too grand for a packet-boat! you 're used to a coach and four, or a private carriage with a groom, I reckon." Then rather impatiently, "You 'll undress right here and leave your clothes on the floor if you like; most folks are n't too fine to take them into the berth with them. And so good-night, miss," she added as she raised the curtain to leave.

A lantern hanging from the ceiling gave a dim light, and after the stewardess had gone, Barbara stood a moment irresolute. She could n't bear to undress there, and she knew she could n't find room for her clothes on that shelf; and besides, she thought, what if anything should happen and she had to get out in a hurry? She hesitated, and then came the thought, "I 'll not undress at all; then I shall be ready for anything."

Taking off her hat, and not finding any place to put it, she at last hung it up by pin-

ning the strings to the curtain. She then put her foot on the edge of the lower berth, as she had been told, and was instantly greeted with a sharp "Who 's that?" from the berth.

"It 's only me," said Barbara meekly; "the woman told me to get up this way."

"Well, you need n't stick your shoe right into my face," said the voice crossly; "you should n't sit up half the night, anyway, and come disturbing folks so late."

Barbara had nothing to say to this, and being now safely in her berth she made herself as comfortable as she could with her clothes on, and being really tired after the excitements of the day, was soon asleep. She was not very comfortable, however, and after her first nap she was restless and tossed and tumbled in her narrow bed, two or three times just saving herself from falling out.

In the morning she was pale and tired; her clothes were twisted every way, and dreadfully mussed. She climbed down as quietly as she could and was trying to comb and braid her hair, when the curtains of the lower berth

parted and a woman's head appeared; she eyed Barbara sharply.

"Slept in your clothes, I guess!" she said. "You look like it! You're the uneasiest critter I ever knew; kept me awake half the night. I'll get the stewardess to put you somewhere else to-night. How're you going to git your frock decent?" she added.

"I don't know," said Barbara, looking ruefully at the wrinkled condition of her pretty new dress.

"You'll have to git the stewardess to iron it out for you," said the woman more kindly as she saw how distressed Barbara was.

"Well, girlie!" said Uncle Karl when she hurried to the deck and found him, "how did you sleep?" and then in surprise, "What ails your dress?"

"Why — why —" stammered Barbara, "I could n't bear to undress down there and I — I — slept in it."

"Whew!" whistled Uncle Karl. "I should think you did! We'll have to get it pressed, I guess."

"But I have n't anything else to put on," wailed Barbara; "and there is n't any place to stay — and — and — " Genuine tears now choked her and made her silent.

"Well, never mind, dearie," said Uncle Karl soothingly. "We 'll manage some way; don't cry! See what a lovely country this is we are going through! We are almost to the city of R——. That 's a fine place and worth seeing."

The mussed dress turned out not to be so bad as feared. It was of wool and of rather wiry texture, so that, being all day in a warm sun, it straightened itself out a good deal, and by the end of the day it did not look so very bad. But that night Barbara was careful to take it off and hang it up by the simple way of pinning it to the curtain in front of her berth.

By the time they reached Buffalo Barbara had got used to sleeping in a berth, and so she was not disturbed when Uncle Karl led her on board the steamer Empire State, which was to take them "around the lakes."

Here Barbara had a little stateroom to her-

self, and Uncle Karl had one next to it, so that she could talk to him, and this was really a charming trip. They passed through Lake Erie, then the little St. Clair, next Lake Huron, and lastly the great Lake Michigan.

It took them several days to get through all these lakes, but Barbara was fond of the water, and besides they had a fine band on board, and every evening all the passengers came into the great saloon where the band played and the people danced, and Barbara was never tired of listening to the music and looking at the gay scene. She was really sorry when this part of the journey came to an end, and they landed in Chicago.

The next part of the journey was by stage, a great old-fashioned vehicle with three seats and a place behind for the baggage. It was drawn by four horses and rocked like a cradle as it rolled along.

Two days and a night they passed in the stage, stopping at small towns for their meals and to change horses, riding all night as well as day, sleeping as best they could sitting up.

It was tiresome work, and Barbara was very glad when they reached the great river — the Mississippi — where they were to take to the water again. This time, too, Barbara had a little stateroom to herself, with Uncle Karl in the very next one, and the trip was not a long one.

When they reached the wharf where they were to take another stage for Uncle Karl's home, they found that vehicle waiting, with its four horses and big, red-faced driver on the box, ready to start. The baggage was brought out and soon packed on, and in a very short time they were off.

CHAPTER VI

QUEER WAYS OF AUNT BETTY

After several hours' ride Barbara and Uncle Karl reached the village where he lived, and the stage stopped in front of a nice-looking white house with a pretty grassy yard in front. Uncle Karl got out and helped Barbara down.

"Here we are," he said.

"But uncle!" said Barbara, "the house is all shut up! Aunt Betty must have gone away."

Sure enough; every window was protected by a green blind, and every blind was shut tight; it looked entirely deserted.

"Oh, no!" said Uncle Karl, taking out the handbags and telling the stage driver where to place Barbara's trunk. "Oh, no; she's at home all right. You see," — he went on hurriedly, as they walked up the path, — "your aunt is a wonderful housekeeper — wonderful! and she hates a fly as I do a fop, and so when

she gets the house all in order she just shuts it up so they can't get in." And having now reached the house he led the way past the front steps to a door on the side.

"I guess we'll go in the side door," he said; "that's always unlocked." As he spoke he opened the door and hurried Barbara in so that no fly should take that chance to enter. When he shut the door behind her it was perfectly dark.

"Betty!" he called, opening the door into a room almost as dark as the hall, "where are you?"

A voice came from a distance, "Up here; come right up."

"Here's Barbara," called her uncle again. "Come down and see her, won't you?"

In a moment appeared her aunt, a tall, thin woman with an anxious-looking face. She kissed Barbara, and said she was glad to see her, and they would go right up to her room. And off she started.

Barbara's heart sank. Was this dungeon of a house the place she had come to stay in?

Was this fretful-looking woman — so afraid of flies and daylight — really her aunt? and must she live with her? She was on the verge of tears, but Uncle Karl's hearty voice comforted her.

"When you get off your things, girlie, come right out to the studio; that's where I live." And to his wife, "Betty, I'll send the boys to carry Barbara's trunk up."

"They better wait till after dark," said Aunt Betty anxiously; "they 'll let too many flies in if they come now."

"Very well," said Uncle Karl. "Barbara won't mind, I'm sure, will you, girlie?"

"No," said Barbara faintly, longing to hold on to him, and almost fearing to go with her aunt.

However, as Uncle Karl left the house, slipping quickly out of the door and closing it after him, she had to follow her aunt as well as she could through the dark. She stumbled over chairs and bumped against tables, for, coming so suddenly out of the bright sunshine, she could not see.

"It seems dark to you," said her aunt, not unkindly, as they climbed the stairs; "but you see, Barbara, we 're awfully troubled with flies, and they do ruin nice furniture so, I can't bear to have them get in. I sit up here," she said, opening the door of a large cheerful-looking room at the very back of the house, and carefully shutting the door after they were in. There stood her sewing table and her low chair, and indeed it was plain that this back chamber was the real living-room of the house. Here the blinds were a little open, but every window was shut, and on this pleasant fall day the air of the room was stifling.

"This is where I sit," said Aunt Betty; "here you 'll generally find me after I get the house in order in the morning. Your room is down the hall; I 'll show you." And returning to the dark hall, she opened a door and ushered Barbara into another dark room; she stepped to the window and turned the slats of the blinds so that a little light came in, and then carefully drew down the sash so that no vagrant fly should slip in also.

It was a pretty little room, but Barbara's pleasure in it was at once destroyed by her aunt's next remark.

"I 'd like to have you be careful, Barbara, always to close the window when you open the slats, or you 'll let flies in all over the house. You won't care to stay here much, you know; you 'll like best the studio, where your uncle does n't mind flies. There 's one now!" she cried suddenly, making a wild dash at a poor little straggler who must have been waiting beside the window to slip in when it was opened for an instant.

To Barbara's amazement now began a mad chase of the unfortunate insect; snatching a towel from the rack, Aunt Betty pursued the frightened creature around the room, striking at him when he tried to escape by settling on the ceiling, and approaching warily when he tried to seek rest for the soles of his feet on furniture or window.

At last by a sudden grab of the towel she secured him, and cautiously opening the window a crack, she cast him out comfortless

upon the wide, wide world, where the much bedraggled and utterly discomfited creature settled on the outside of the sill, with the air of thinking over the adventure. His manner was so droll that Barbara had hard work to keep from laughing, though she was very near to crying from sudden homesickness.

"You can lay off your things here and wash yourself if you wish, — you must be dusty after that stage ride," said her aunt, "and then I presume you'll like to go to the studio; or if you like to come to see me, you'll find me in my sewing-room."

"Where is the studio?" asked Barbara faintly.

"You go out the side door where you came in, and just go down the walk past the corner of the house, and you 'll see it. I wonder your uncle did n't show it to you: he 's awful fond of it; he fairly lives there; he don't care a snap about having things kept nice. I might work my fingers to the bone to preserve the furniture for all he 'd care," she added rather bitterly.

Very quickly Barbara threw off her things, gave herself a hasty wash, — struggling to keep back the tears, — and then stumbled her way back downstairs, through the dismal dining-room, — in which she wondered if they ever ate, — out of the door, into the beautiful sunlight once more.

Never again did she want to enter that dungeon. She had a wild desire to run away that minute, and never, never come back; but the sight of Uncle Karl standing in the door of a low, pleasant-looking building among the apple-trees, gave her courage. She ran to him, flung herself into his arms, and the tears burst forth in a shower.

"Now, girlie!" he said soothingly, patting her back while the flood poured over his shoulder, "now, girlie, don't take it so hard! this is your home, you know. Your aunt, you see," hesitating just how to put it, "your aunt is a wonderful housekeeper, and flies are to her like a red rag to a bull; but she means to make us all comfortable — as you 'll see; only those of us who are n't so very nice — why

we just live out here. Come in, girlie," and he drew her into a large light room with doors and windows all open, and easels and paints and canvases and easychairs all around.

The first glance through her tears showed Barbara a thousand things of interest; she wiped her eyes, and in a few moments was eagerly questioning Uncle Karl about the things she saw.

"Now," said her uncle, "I'll fix a corner for you;" and at once cleared a small table by sweeping its many contents onto the floor, saying, —

"I'll look them over and put them away by and by."

This table he placed near a low window that looked away from the house into the heart of the orchard, and before it he drew up a specially comfortable armchair.

"There, girlie," he said cheerfully, "that's your corner; you can bring out your writing things or your sewing things — if you ever sew," he added grimly, "and keep them on that table. No one will disturb them; we don't sweep out here."

"No; I see you don't," interrupted Barbara, a laugh spreading over her face as she looked around the room.

"No," said Uncle Karl, laughing too; "this is Liberty Hall; it's a sort of offset to over there," nodding his head in the direction of the house. "We can't be strenuous all the time; we must relax sometimes — and this is the place we do it."

"May I stay here with you all the time?" asked Barbara eagerly.

"Yes, indeed; every minute you choose, but you'll get acquainted; there are some nice folks here, and by and by I shan't see half so much of you as I want to."

"Oh, yes, you will! I shall stay here always."

Just then a bell rang, and Uncle Karl hurried to a far corner, where he washed his hands and brushed his hair, and then taking Barbara's arm, he started towards the door. "That's supper," he said briefly.

Barbara shrank back. "Oh, I don't want any supper," she said.

"Yes, you do, girlie; don't be silly. It isn't so bad as you fear, and anyway you'll have to get used to it, for you know you're going to live with me, and you must eat."

Very unwillingly Barbara went with Uncle Karl back to the house, and, picking their way through the dark dining-room, came to the large kitchen, where light enough was allowed to enter to enable them to see to eat.

On one side, far enough from the stove to be comfortable, a corner was evidently fitted for a dining-room; a square of carpet covered the floor, a table spread for the evening meal stood ready.

"You sit here, Barbara," said her aunt, indicating one of the chairs, while she and Uncle Karl took the others. The supper was very good and abundant, and Barbara was hungry.

"Where's Mary?" asked Uncle Karl, looking around the kitchen.

"She's out picking the currants," answered Aunt Betty. "I'm going to make jelly tomorrow."

CHAPTER VII

STRENUOUS HOUSEKEEPING

"GIRLIE," said Uncle Karl as they parted for the night at the door of her room, where Barbara found her trunk already placed, her bed opened, and a candle burning on the stand, "girlie, you 're tired with the journey, and in the morning you need n't get up till you want to. I 'll take your breakfast out to the studio for you."

She hesitated. "But Aunt Betty — "

"I 'll arrange it with your aunt," he said; "to-morrow is sweeping-day, and she and Mary begin work very early, so you need n't stir if you hear them; you just come out to me the first thing."

Barbara was tired, and only unpacking enough to get out night clothes, she quickly jumped into bed and was asleep in a minute, first, however, quietly opening her window, for she felt that she should smother.

Before it was really light she awoke to hear strange noises downstairs. Chairs and tables seemed to be dragged about, and she was quite alarmed till she remembered what Uncle Karl had said about sweeping-day.

However, she could not sleep any more, so she got up and dressed, and then — leaving her bed open to air with window opened, though blinds closed — she went softly downstairs.

The dining-room was full of furniture, and, the door on the other side of the hall being open, she thought she would take a look at the parlor. That room was half lighted by the slats of the blinds being turned, and there she saw her aunt on her knees doing something at the edge of the carpet. Every bit of furniture was out of the room; she knew where it was, for she had stumbled over it in the dining-room. Every curtain and shade was taken down; every picture taken from the wall.

Wondering what her aunt was doing, Barbara went into the room to say good-morning, and apologize for her late appearance.

To her amazement her aunt was at work with a hairpin picking out the dust that gathered between the edge of the carpet and the wall, and looking back of her, Barbara saw a little row of dust-heaps already dug out and waiting, no doubt, for the broom.

"Why, Aunt Betty! are you cleaning house?" she asked, looking around at the bare room.

"Cleaning house!" cried her aunt scornfully; "No indeed! Do you think I leave the carpet down when I clean house! I'm just sweeping it as I do every Friday. Does n't your mother have her house swept every week?"

"Yes, of course;" said Barbara; "but she does n't have everything taken out."

"Well, *I* can't feel that I get my rooms clean unless I go to the bottom of everything," said Aunt Betty, digging savagely at the crack by the edge of the carpet. "When I get around the edge I shall go over it with the broom again."

"I should think it must be awful clean," said Barbara politely.

"Clean, child!" said her aunt, jerking herself along to reach a new place; "clean! it is far enough from clean! After I have swept it two or three times I go over every inch of it with a damp cloth and then I don't get the dirt all off. I never feel with all my work that my house is *really* clean. Did you leave your room shut up?" she asked with sudden thought.

"Why no!" said Barbara, feeling very guilty. "I left the window open to air the bed — but I did n't open the blinds," she added hastily, seeing a look of horror on her aunt's face. "Shall I run up and close it?" she said quickly.

"Yes," said her aunt; "and you better make your bed while you are there; I never leave my beds open. I think there 's a great deal of nonsense said about airing beds."

Barbara hurried back through the crowded dining-room and upstairs, very rebellious thoughts stirring in her heart.

"Aunt 's so particular about a speck of dust," she thought, "I should think she'd

want fresh air in her house too;" and she sighed as she thought of her own home with every window wide open, not only all night, but during the day, when the weather would allow.

When she reached the room she was horrified to see two or three flies floating around near the ceiling as if in glee at really getting into the house.

Hastily closing the door, Barbara began a vigorous war on the intruders with a towel, and not till she had seen the last one escape through the blinds did she close the window and turn her attention to the bed.

Now Barbara had never made a bed in her life. Having always been in school, with studies and piano practice at home, and no long summer vacations, such as schoolchildren have now-a-days, her mother had thought best for her to be out of doors all the time she had to spare.

She now looked in dismay at the tumbled bedclothes, and wondered if she could ever get them straight. A long time she struggled,

but she could not make the bed look as it should; it seemed as if every blanket and sheet had a will of its own, and a few tears and many rebellious thoughts went to the making of it.

At last when it was in tolerable order she hurried downstairs, and as she passed the parlor she saw her aunt on her knees with a pail of water and a cloth, going over the carpet as she had said.

"O dear!" thought Barbara, "I can *never* please Aunt Betty! I wish I was home!"

With these thoughts she entered the studio where Uncle Karl was busily engaged at his easel.

"Why, girlie," he said, "what's the matter?" More tears came at his kind tone.

"Oh, Uncle Karl! I want to go home! I never can please Aunt Betty — I can't — I can't!" and sobs interrupted her.

"Now, girlie," he said, putting away his brushes and drawing her on to his knee, "you must n't take things so hard; your aunt, as I told you, is a wonderful housekeeper; but

she is kind-hearted, and she won't be hard on you. She may want to teach you some of her ways, but you won't mind that; it's good to be a nice housekeeper — if it isn't carried too far," he added somewhat ruefully. "But I'll tell you" — brightening up — "you're going to live out here with me, you know. See what a breakfast I have for you!" and he pointed to her little table, where, sure enough, a plentiful breakfast was spread out.

Barbara was hungry after her bed-making labors, and comforted, as she always was in her troubles, by dear Uncle Karl, she soon forgot her sorrow in eating her breakfast.

"What shall I do with the dishes?" she asked when she had finished.

"Put them on the tray," said Uncle Karl, "and take them to the kitchen; go to the back door, you know, and Mary will take them. You 'll find Mary very nice," he went on. "I told her about you."

Barbara did as she was bid; she found Mary busily engaged in preparing the currants for the grand jelly-making, which was

to take place that afternoon. The kitchen was as neat as any one's parlor, and Mary, with her white apron and smiling face, was as neat as the room.

"I'm sorry to give you so much trouble, when your breakfast dishes are all washed," said Barbara, as she set the tray on the table. "I won't be so lazy again."

"Oh, I don't mind!" said Mary good-naturedly. "I'll get them out of the way in a jiffy," and she put aside the work she was doing and turned her attention to the tray.

"I should like to help you," said Barbara timidly, "but I'm afraid I could n't do it well enough to suit Aunt Betty."

"Your aunt *is* particular," said Mary, "but I've lived with her five years and learned her ways, so 't we get along first-rate. She had about forty-'leven girls the year before I came to her, and none of them suited her;" and Mary laughed softly at the recollection. "And even I, after five years' training," she went on, "even I can't sweep the parlor to suit her; she has to do that all herself; I can take

out the things and put them back, but I can't clean it."

"I tried to make up my bed," said Barbara, encouraged by Mary's friendly manner, "but it looks awful — I never made one before."

"Well," said Mary kindly, "I'll just slip up, soon 's I get these things put away, and straighten it out a little, and if you want, I'll show you how to do it to-morrow."

"Oh, thank you!" said Barbara gratefully, "I shall be glad to learn."

CHAPTER VIII

JACK FROST AS SANTA CLAUS

"BARBARA," said her aunt, the morning before Christmas, "will you go down to Mrs. Brown's and ask her if she can help me to-morrow?"

Barbara consented, of course, and was soon on her way. It was a glorious morning, and she walked between high walls of snow each side. Six feet deep it lay all over that part of the country, and the walks had been cut out.

Mrs. Brown's little house, hardly more than a shanty, was not far off, down a side street, and she soon reached it. Mrs. Brown went out to days' work, and she was not at home that morning, but Maggie was there.

Maggie was Mrs. Brown's daughter, about Barbara's age, and an invalid, not able to walk at present, though the good doctor hoped she would be better in the spring.

Cheerless enough was the room, though clean as constant scrubbing could make it.

There was no fire in the rickety old stove, and the sick girl was bundled up in all the blankets and quilts the house held that she might not suffer, for wood was too costly to be used through the day. When the children came home from school and the mother from her work they had to have a little fire.

But Maggie's eyes were brilliant, and a smile of perfect happiness made her plain little face almost lovely.

Barbara was startled by her look, and after delivering her errand, and finding she must wait till Mrs. Brown came home, she exclaimed, —

"Why Maggie! how bright you look? what's happened?"

"Oh," said Maggie warmly, "I've had such wonderful Christmas presents! such beautiful, beautiful pictures! I don't believe any one in the world has had such wonderful pictures!"

"Pictures?" said Barbara, looking around on the poor bare walls, "where are they?"

"Look!" cried Maggie joyously, pointing to the only window in the room.

Barbara looked and saw only a bare, bleak-looking window, every pane of which was covered with frost-work.

"I don't see any pictures," she said rather crossly, for she thought Maggie was fooling her.

"Oh, don't you!" said Maggie. "Look at that one, at the bottom, next the door; don't you see the great mountains covered with trees, all full of birds, and beautiful clouds blowing over them? And see that lot of children climbing up the steep rocks, every one with a tall stick, and flowers in their hair, and long white gowns on. They're going to the top to see the world over the other side, and they're singing as they go! How happy they look! Oh, it's wonderful!"

Barbara looked, and could see how the fantastic frost-work could be made to look as Maggie saw it.

"And the next one," went on Maggie, rapturously. "See that garden full of sweet flowers and vines, almost hiding the little arbor; and the beautiful trees where the birds

are singing, I know. And see that little girl not so big as me, with a little silver rake, raking up the weeds. Is n't she lovely, with her white shining frock and white slippers? How happy she must be! And then that pretty Christmas tree in the next, all hung full of lovely things, and the children dancing around it; and see that little doggie down in the corner dancing about with the rest — ain't he cute? And see the children all in white, with their arms all full of books and things. And do you see their mamma — a beautiful woman off in the corner in her rocking-chair? Ah!" with a sigh of bliss, "how happy they are!"

Barbara, who at first thought Maggie had gone crazy, really began to see the things described, for the window was indeed a wonderful example of fantastic frost-work, and a vivid imagination could see almost anything.

"And look at the next one, on top; see that beautiful lake so still and shining, and the great hills all around it, and the moon just coming over the hills. And see! in the

far corner a little boat with silver sail and a girl lying asleep all covered up with flowers, so sweet she looks — see her?"

"Yes," assented Barbara, fired with Maggie's enthusiasm, in spite of herself.

"And the boat is slowly moving," went on Maggie, "and it 'll come to the shore where other girls will meet her. The next picture is the best of all," went on Maggie, almost solemnly, her voice becoming soft and low — almost with a sort of awe. "It 's the woods — all trees, wonderful, wonderful trees, with mossy old trunks and dear little flowers around their feet. I love that one best of all; see the darling little brook running over the stones and sparkling in the sunshine! Oh! is n't it lovely! I can almost hear the birds singing. Oh!" sighed Maggie, with accent of almost greater bliss than she could bear. "Oh! what a beautiful world it is! Oh! I am so happy!" and she closed her eyes in a sort of ecstasy.

Barbara looked around the poverty-stricken room, — cold, dark, dismal enough, — and that happy face on the pillow she could not

understand. After a moment she asked, in a low voice, "Maggie, can I do anything for you? Shall I make a fire?"

Maggie opened her eyes, a sweet smile on her face. "No," she said, "wood is so dear mother can't afford a fire all day, and I'm warm enough. I've been making Christmas presents for the children," she went on; "would you like to see them?"

"Yes," answered Barbara, wondering what they could be.

"Well, here they are," said Maggie, drawing a dingy pasteboard box from under the bed covering. She opened it and displayed with sparkling eyes to the amazed Barbara several things made out of paper. "There's a doll for Susy," she said, holding up a paper doll dressed in clothes cut from a piece of brown wrapping paper, with features made with a lead pencil. "See, she has a hat, and her frock takes off. Susy's awful fond of dolls. And this," she went on, carefully lifting it out of the box, "is a dog drawing a sled. That's for Johnny, he loves dogs so."

"Where did you learn to cut out dogs?" asked Barbara, — for it was really quite a creditable dog, of the brown paper, with harness and sled of white paper.

"Why, I found a picture in a book and cut it as near like that as I could. I know Johnny 'll like it."

"Of course he will," said Barbara.

"I tried to think of something I could make for mother," said Maggie rather wistfully, "but I could n't think of anything. Can you think of anything I could make?" she added.

"I 'm afraid I can't," said Barbara.

"Oh, here 's another thing!" said Maggie, holding up a ring of dancing girls, cut out of the same brown paper. "See, they 'll stand up! Susy 'll like that. And for Johnny I made a ball," and she drew out her last treasure, — a ball of strips of paper wound tightly and held by string wound closely around it everyway.

Barbara went home very slowly, a happy thought struggling for expression, — a plan of what she might do to brighten that dull little

room; and it was a very eager Barbara who at last took Uncle Karl into her counsels.

"Uncle Karl," she said earnestly, "such a dismal place you never saw! cold and dark and horrid, and such poor little things for presents! and that girl so happy! Why, she told wonderful stories about the frost on the windowpanes; she saw so many things in them and called them her Christmas presents — her pictures. I never heard any one talk so; I thought at first she was crazy, but after a while she made me see them too."

"That reminds me," said Uncle Karl, "of a piece I used to speak in school about Jack Frost. I can remember only one verse," and throwing himself into schoolboy attitude he began: —

"He went to the windows of those who slept,
And over each pane like a fairy crept:
Wherever he breathed, wherever he stepped,
By the light of the moon were seen
Most beautiful things: there were flowers and trees;
There were bevies of birds and swarms of bees;
There were cities with temples and towers, and these
All pictured in silver sheen."

"Oh! that's lovely!" cried Barbara, "Can't you remember the rest? I'd like to learn it and say it to Maggie. I'm sure she'd like it."

Uncle Karl studied very hard a few minutes, but he could n't think of another word. At last he said, "Perhaps it'll come to me sometime, and if it does I'll remember it for you. That must be the girl — that Maggie — that sometimes came with her mother to work, and I found her several times standing in the studio door looking at the pictures as if she would devour them. She must have a great deal of fine feeling."

"I'm sure she has," said Barbara enthusiastically, "and I'm going to give her some of my books."

"Ask your Aunt Betty," said Uncle Karl. "She'll surely help; and I'll find something — I'll tell you, girlie," suddenly, "I have a big woodpile, more than enough for the winter for us, and I'll get Tom Bruce to take a load over to them."

"Oh! that'll be splendid!" said Barbara, "Maggie said her mother could n't afford to

have a fire all day when she was alone; so she was bundled up in all the bedclothes in the house, I guess."

Barbara rushed eagerly into the house, where she found Aunt Betty in the kitchen with Mary, both very busy with Christmas doings.

She told the story of Maggie and her poor little presents, and Aunt Betty was interested and said she would send something, and Mary's warm heart was touched, and she began to plan what she could do.

The next morning Barbara brought out several books, and a warm dressing-gown she had worn when she was ill, but was sure her mother would let her give to Maggie; and Aunt Betty went into her pantry and prepared a basket filled with a regular Christmas dinner: a roast chicken with proper accompaniments, a suet pudding, and the sweets that children love — cakes, cookies, jam, raisins, and nuts; such a Christmas dinner as the Brown children had never seen.

Last of all, Barbara thrust into the loaded

basket a box of candy — one of her own presents which had come by mail that day; and when her aunt looked surprised at this gift from the candy-lover, she said, —

"You know, aunt, I had two boxes, and I don't believe Maggie ever had one."

And when that morning the grocer brought some things to the house and saw what was going on, he went quietly back to the store and packed a barrel full of vegetables, — turnips, onions, cabbages, and potatoes, with a goodly sprinkling of apples.

And after that he told the story to the group of men who always hang around a country store, and one kind-hearted old man who had known hard times in his life told the storekeeper to send a bag of flour and charge to his account; and when he went home and told his wife, she brought out of her clothes-press a comfortable woolen dress for Mrs. Brown, and another neighbor hunted up a warm cloak that her daughter had outgrown, for Maggie when she was better.

In fact, that happy thought of Barbara's

spread so fast and so far that the Brown family had the most wonderful Christmas they had ever known.

After that Barbara went often to see Maggie and help her pass the weary hours, and she had the pleasure of seeing that the warmth, and the more abundant food, and the happiness that Maggie felt, all together helped her to get well very fast, so that in a few weeks she could sit up, wrapped in Barbara's warm wrapper, and before summer was able to come up to the studio and return some of Barbara's visits.

CHAPTER IX

STICKY TIMES IN THE STUDIO

One morning some weeks later, after Barbara had made her bed and put her room in order, — which now, thanks to Mary's help, she could do very nicely, — she hastened as usual to the studio, where she was surprised to see a visitor. A young lady was talking volubly to Uncle Karl, who looked a little disturbed.

"And I'm sure it won't be much trouble, Mr. Burton," she said glibly, "or I would n't think of asking you, for I know you are so busy."

"How many figures did you say?" asked the artist, pausing with brush in hand.

"Only eight; and they may be as rough as you please," the lady hastened to say. "It won't take you long to dash off one, will it?"

"N-o," said the artist, hesitating, "the mere painting won't be much."

"Oh, we 'll prepare the canvas and all that," interrupted the eager lady.

Uncle Karl hesitated; he was extremely busy; he felt that he could n't spare the time, yet on the other hand, it was for a Sunday-school entertainment. He might do it in the evening, and — in a word, he was too good-natured to refuse.

His guest was quick to see yielding in his face.

"Oh, I 'm so glad! I know you 've decided to help us out! Thank you *so* much! I 'll send the canvases over right away;" which she did.

"Humph! no trouble!" said Uncle Karl softly, when he saw the eight full-length canvases brought into the studio, with a frame on which each one was to be stretched for painting. "I only wish I may get through in a week!"

"Now Barbara," he went on, after a few moments, "you can help me a little in this, for I shall paint these figures in distemper."

"Distemper!" exclaimed Barbara. "What 's that?"

"Why, you know," said Uncle Karl mildly, "I shall not waste oil paints on these things to be used only an hour or two; I shall get dry paints and mix them with weak glue. You can prepare the glue and mix the colors."

Barbara was delighted to do something for her dear uncle who was always doing so much for her, and listened eagerly as he went on.

"I shall need nine colors," he said, after a few moments' thought, "and therefore nine dishes of some sort to mix in. Mary will give you these; any old cans will do. You will have to dissolve the glue and stir each color into it."

Barbara consented eagerly, and hurried off to Mary for the dishes.

Well, a pound of glue was bought and put into a pan of water on the studio stove to dissolve. When this was done, Barbara — who was eager to do it all herself — told Uncle Karl that she knew how to make glue, and he could go back to his work. With a sigh of relief he did so, and Barbara set herself to watch matters in the pan.

When the glue was reduced to liquid form, Barbara filled one of the cans half full of the evil-smelling stuff and began work on the first color her uncle had placed ready for her. This was labeled "Lampblack."

She poured some of the dry powder into the glue and began to stir; the first dash sent a cloud of the lampblack in a great puff over her dress and the floor around.

"Oh!" she cried, but softly, not to disturb Uncle Karl; and laying down the paper of lampblack, she hurried to the washing basin behind a screen at the back of the studio, to brush her dress and wash her hands. But lampblack is peculiarly greasy, and glue is sticky, and she did not succeed in getting very clean, while all attempts to brush it off her dress ended in smearing it over the whole front.

"Well," she said to herself at last, "this dress is spoiled, and I may as well keep it to use all through;" and she returned to the making of distemper.

Now she worked more carefully, but in spite

of her greatest efforts the lampblack would continue to mix with the air, and not by any coaxing with the glue. When Uncle Karl chanced to look up and saw the concern on Barbara's face, and noticed the fine coating of lampblack over everything around, he came hastily over to examine.

Barbara was a sight, and everything in her vicinity was also; and almost choking in generous efforts to keep from laughing at her, he told her to leave the lampblack, go to the kitchen for Mary's help in getting it off her face and hands, and then go to work on the other colors.

After as thorough a scrubbing as soap and water could furnish, Barbara returned, still wearing the soiled dress, ready to try again.

Of course no one—at least, no young girl—ever handled glue without getting herself more or less daubed. First Barbara got her hands sticky, and then getting excited and warm, everything she touched was daubed; gradually her eyebrows, her forehead, her very lips were gluey; her loose hair glued

fast to her forehead — her eyelashes sticking to her cheeks when she winked. Several times during that morning she slipped quietly over to the kitchen and begged Mary's help and hot water to soak herself out a little, so that she could go on and not trouble Uncle Karl, and then returned to her work.

With the colors she had no trouble, and eight beautiful cans of colored glue rewarded her efforts.

The cans were placed on a table for use that evening, and the fire under the glue-pot put out.

"There!" she said, with a sigh of satisfaction, "that horrid job is done!"

Was it?

"Now," said Uncle Karl after supper, drawing out the big frame consisting of four sides like a box without top or bottom, with a canvas four feet by six stretched on each of the four sides, "now for these figures!"

He placed his frame conveniently near the light, moved his chair up before it, took his brush, and dipped into the first can. Alas! it

touched something hard; he looked in—it was solid as a rock! In turn he examined each one—each was a solid mass! the glue was too thick.

He was dismayed. "Poor Barbara!" was his first thought, followed by "Is n't it a joke on her!"

He then proceeded to arrange the joke. Carefully loosening each solid cake of glue, he turned them out in a row on the table. They made a beautiful show—rocks of lovely colors, crimson lake, translucent yellow, heavenly blue, and others. Then he called Barbara to see them.

"Uncle Karl!" she exclaimed in horror; and then as the truth dawned upon her she added, "That glue was too thick!"

"So it was, my dear; you were too generous," said Uncle Karl, putting away the bulky frame. "I 'll wait till to-morrow."

To-morrow Barbara tried it again. Laboriously she melted up part of each lovely color, thinned it with water, daubing herself afresh with glue, and again set eight cans of dis-

temper on the table for use, with "I guess that's thin enough—it's nothing but water."

Again came out the big frame, and once more the brush was thrust in. Not far! the contents were jelly,—sparkling, shaking, rainbow-hued jelly, and not to be handled by a brush.

It was hardly a joke this time; temper that was not distemper began to come dangerously near the surface as Barbara surveyed her work; two days wasted and glue all over everything, was a little too much even for a good-natured girl to bear. She had her say and then—well, then she tried it again. A very small quantity of the colored jelly was dissolved in quarts of water. Eight times this operation was repeated, Barbara getting more dauby and more impatient every time.

But at last it was right. That evening a very tired and very much "stuck up" Barbara sat by while Uncle Karl with big brushes painted life-sized figures.

Four were partly done and must be left to dry before they could be finished, yet he had

time to sketch in more. Barbara, eager to help again, forgot the nature of glue, and her own fingers stretched the fifth canvas over one already painted. The fifth figure was sketched, and all were left to dry.

The next morning on returning to the work it was found that, although thin, the glue was good. The two canvases were one; no amount of pulling would separate them, and they finally went into the bath-tub to soak apart at their leisure and be painted over again.

After four evenings of work from Uncle Karl, and four days of struggle and work from Barbara, the thing that was to be "very little work" was done and sent away. But the studio was a sight! lampblack over everything, — glue over everything. If one sat quietly half an hour in a chair, it was impossible to get out of it without tearing one's clothes in the effort; a book lying carelessly on the table was found to be a fixture; every garment worn there was daubed.

This would never do; and much as he hated

to have his things disturbed, Uncle Karl told Aunt Betty of the trouble. She at once replied with glee that she would attend to it, for she had tried in vain to get a chance to clean the studio, the condition of which was a great trial to her.

CHAPTER X

UNCLE KARL AND BARBARA RUN AWAY

"To-MORROW," said Aunt Betty, at the supper table, — "to-morrow Mary and I are going to clean the studio!"

This fell like a thunderbolt on Uncle Karl and Barbara, who looked at each other in dismay.

"We should only be in the way, girlie," he said. "Let's run away! Where shall we go?"

"Why don't you take Barbara to Newberry?" asked Aunt Betty. "That's a pleasant ride, and will show some of our country."

"That's a good idea," said Uncle Karl; "and I have a little business there too; I want to see Blake about something. Do you like to ride, girlie?"

"Oh, yes," said Barbara eagerly; "I love it!"

"Well, then, we 'll go. And, by the way, it must be maple-sugar time! We may be able to see something of that."

After some more talk, it was settled that they were to start early the next morning, and as it was a long way to Newberry, they would stay all night at Mrs. Blake's, and come back the next morning.

At this Barbara demurred.

"But perhaps she can't keep us," she protested.

"Oh, Mrs. Blake takes summer boarders," said Aunt Betty. "She has a houseful every summer from St. Paul, and she 's always ready to entertain. It 's almost like a hotel."

The next morning before it was very light Barbara was called, and remembering that this was Uncle Karl's holiday, she jumped out of bed, hastily got into her clothes, and ran downstairs. Breakfast was smoking on the table, and Uncle Karl was all ready to start.

"You need n't stop to make up your bed," said Aunt Betty; "it 's a long ride to Newberry. Mary 'll do that."

Before the door stood a horse hitched to a buckboard. Barbara stared at the strange vehicle. It was merely a long board reaching from the front to the back wheels, with a seat resting upon it, and no box.

"Why, Uncle Karl," she said, "what a queer wagon! I never saw one like it."

"It 's a buckboard, my dear," said Uncle Karl, "and very comfortable to ride in, as you 'll see. And is n't old Charley a nice horse?"

Hearing his name, the intelligent beast turned his head and looked at them. Uncle Karl patted his nose, and looking at Barbara with a twinkle in his eye, said, "Have n't you a lump of sugar you could give him?"

"I 'll get one," said Barbara, running back into the house. She found the kitchen deserted for the moment, and hastily taking a lump from the sugar-bowl, she ran back and offered it to Uncle Karl.

"You give it to him yourself," said Uncle Karl. "Don't offer it with your fingers," he said suddenly, as she was about to hold it up

to Charley's mouth. "Open your hand wide and lay it in the palm; then he can get it without danger of taking a finger with it."

Barbara did as she was bid, and Old Charley — who was evidently used to such attentions — daintily took the sugar and munched it with evident satisfaction. Then Uncle Karl helped Barbara up to her seat, and they were off.

It was a lovely morning in February. The snow which had covered the ground all winter was about gone; the roads, which quickly dry in that country, were very good; and Charley trotted along as if he enjoyed it as much as the two runaways did.

About noon they came to a lane, up which Uncle Karl turned the horse.

"Where are you going, Uncle Karl?" asked Barbara.

"I think we 'll stop here for dinner; it 's just about their dinner-time."

The fresh air had made Barbara hungry, and she was glad when the farmer's wife — who came to the door as they came up — said

she could give them dinner if they would take "pot-luck" with the family. Charley was sent off to the barn to get his dinner, and Uncle Karl and Barbara went into the big kitchen, where the farmer's wife was just taking up the meal.

A long table was set with knives and forks, and a big pile of plates at one place along about the middle; and putting on two more knives and forks, she told her guests to sit down.

Uncle Karl asked if they could wash their hands and faces first. She gave them a clean towel and told them to go right out to the pump.

Uncle Karl's eyes laughed as he led the astonished Barbara out to the back of the house, where they found one of the farmer's men already engaged in washing face and hands by the simple process of giving the pump-handle a jerk which started the water, and then catching it in his hands as it fell, and throwing it over face and hands.

Barbara looked on in horror. "I could n't do that!" she whispered.

"You need n't," said her uncle; "you can wet part of this towel and use that; but you see how much trouble this way saves. Now I like it!" and he proceeded to follow the example of the man who had finished, and threw great handfuls of the clear cold water over face and head.

Their toilets thus made, the two went back to the kitchen, where the family were already seated.

"Set right up," said the farmer's wife.

The farmer, at whose place stood the pile of plates, was serving the dinner from a huge pan — a dish-pan it looked like. Barbara looked on in surprise as he took from this smoking receptacle great chunks of meat, potatoes, turnips, beets, and parsnips, filling up each plate with a pile of these things and then passing it along. Everything was in that pan, excepting the salt and the butter, and an enormous platter of what looked like small loaves of bread.

When a plate, generously filled from the pan, was placed before Barbara, she looked at

it in dismay, and Uncle Karl, taking the platter of loaves, offered it to her, saying with roguish looks, "Have a biscuit, Barbara?"

"Biscuit!" gasped Barbara; then recovering herself, "I'd like part of one, Uncle Karl."

Barbara was hungry, as I said; so taking up her funny two-tined fork, which looked like a pitchfork, she began picking bits off the great mound of provisions before her. It tasted better than she had feared, and she had no trouble in making a good dinner without half emptying her plate, and then she enjoyed looking about to see the rest eat. Every one emptied his plate, and one or two passed theirs back for more.

When the farmer's wife saw that Barbara had eaten all she wanted, and the pan was nearly empty, she got up and brought a plate of pie, and shoving back the dish of meat and vegetables, set it before her. There were two huge pieces, — mince and pumpkin, — with a big piece of cake on top and a great slice of cheese on that.

Barbara looked so astonished that Uncle Karl almost choked trying to keep from laughing. But as she began to look about for a fork to attack this mountain of food, he whispered, "Take your fork from the other plate."

With this overworked implement Barbara timidly set to work on the pie, first laying off the cheese and cake. She found it very hard, however, to manage pieces of the pumpkin pie — which she liked best — with that awkward tool. Again her uncle whispered, "Do as the rest do."

She glanced around; every one was rapidly disposing of the pile of pie, by shoveling great pieces into his mouth with his knife.

Barbara was horrified; but looking at Uncle Karl she found him doing the same, though with twitching lips that showed how hard it was to keep from laughing. She really wanted the pie; so she struggled with this new way of eating till she became rather expert at it, and managed to finish the piece of pumpkin pie, only dropping about half a dozen pieces, and leaving the rest.

"Don't you feel well, miss?" asked the farmer, as she shoved back from the table.

"You don't eat anything; I'm afraid you won't make out a dinner," said his wife, with anxiety.

"Oh, thank you!" said Barbara eagerly. "I've eaten a lot! it's very nice."

"Well, girlie," said Uncle Karl, when they were well on their way again, and they had enjoyed a hearty laugh, "you've learned something to-day. Shall you show off your new table manners with Aunt Betty?"

"Oh, don't tell her, Uncle Karl," said Barbara earnestly; "she would be shocked!"

Uncle Karl laughed loud and long. "She would, indeed. I took her there once —" laughing again at the recollection; "she was hungry when we stopped, but she could n't eat a mouthful; she pleaded a sudden headache, and went and sat on the steps till I came out. She said it made her sick! she was n't used to eating out of a trough;" and again Uncle Karl laughed and Barbara with him, till the woods rang.

CHAPTER XI

DROLL MRS. BLAKE

It was nearly dark, after what Uncle Karl always called their "dishpan dinner," when they reached the suburbs of the village of Newberry and drove into the yard and up to the side door of Mrs. Blake's house.

It was a wide-spreading, old-fashioned building, with a big yard. Under the trees in front were three groups of chairs; queer home-made things of boards, painted bright red and yellow and blue, one of each color in each group.

"Oh, look at those funny chairs!" cried Barbara, laughing. "What are they for?"

"They 're for the boarders to sit on," said Uncle Karl, "and they 're supposed to be very stylish, like the rustic seats the story-books tell about. You must n't laugh at them before Mrs. Blake. She thinks they give her house an air, and they certainly do!" he added, with laughing eyes, though a very

sober mouth, as Mrs. Blake's jolly face appeared at the door with a hearty greeting.

"Why, Mr. Burton! is it really you? And who is this young lady you have brought to see me? Get right out; I'm proper glad to see you," she went on, without waiting for answers.

"Now what would you like for supper?" she asked, after Uncle Karl had gone to the barn to see that Charley was made comfortable.

"Oh, I don't know!" said Barbara. "You know best, Mrs. Blake."

Mrs. Blake considered a moment; then, "How about cream short-cake?"

"I never tasted that," said Barbara; "but it sounds good."

Mrs. Blake laughed. "Well, it eats good too, 'n' I'll make you one; I know you'll like it; all young folks do, — not to mention old folks, specially women; it's a sort o' woman dish. You know men and women have different likings."

"Have they?" asked Barbara.

"Yes, indeed; I've kept summer boarders

a good many years, 'n' I 've learned a thing or two. Now men 'r' great on meat pies. A meat pie 's a real handy thing to have when there 's a passel o' men around; they mostly likes 'em; they 're mighty tasty, too; now Blake 's the fondest man of a meat pie ever I see; I 'd make one for your uncle if there was time."

"Oh, Uncle Karl likes most anything!" said Barbara. "He 's the easiest to please of any one I know."

"Humph! he 's different from summer boarders then!" said Mrs. Blake. "Summer boarders are the beater and all for eating!"

Mrs. Blake had started up to get tea, but summer boarders was plainly a burning subject with her, for she went on pouring out her views, still standing ready to move.

"City folks 'r' such ones to eat! I b'lieve they starve to home! It 's nothin' for them to eat three pieces o' pie an' make whole supper o' cake, 'specially one kind o' mine, 't has fruit in it 'n' is very rich; eat three 'r four pieces — cut big, too! 'n' all the time sayin' they never eats cake to home! I guess not, —

nor anything else, — thinks me! One man and wife 't I had would eat three strawberry short-cakes size of small platters; 'n the way they 'd guzzle the cream, my sakes! My cows 'r' as good as ever a pail set under, but they don't give cream! an' besides stuffin' at table, the loads they 'd carry off! Why! I could n't have oranges or bananas or peaches on the table, for they 'd all be carried off to the rooms to eat between meals."

Mrs. Blake paused an instant, and Barbara had a chance to get in a word.

"They could n't have been very nice people!"

"They called themselves the top notch," said Mrs. Blake. "I had one little boy here — sweet little feller he was! so pretty-spoken, an' allus wantin' to do somethin' to help. He liked to carry a drink to the men in the field, an' when they was diggin' potatoes he liked to go an' pick up; but good gracious me! was n't his ma mad! One day she shut him up all day just 'cause he asked me to let him carry a piece to Mr. Arthur down in the

field." Seeing a look of surprise on Barbara's face, she interrupted herself to explain. "A 'piece,' you know, is just a bit o' lunch, a sandwich maybe 'r a nutcake 'r such. Well, o' course, I done it, an' he started off with his little pail; an' when he come back his mother just shut him up to stay all day 'n' go without his dinner, an' called him a servant an' such! I was that mad I could 'v' stomped on her. Says me, 'The little darlin' shan't go without his dinner.' So I takes the piece o' chicken he liked, — the leg it was; an' I had green-apple pie that day, an' he was the fondest boy o' green-apple pie ever I see; so I cuts him a big piece o' pie, an' just sets 'em away; 'n' the pie was a favorite, an' a good many et three pieces an' some asked for more, 'n I says, 'I'm sorry, but there ain't no more for you;' 'n' about three o'clock poor little feller come down, 'n' I calls him, says I, 'Come here, darlin', aunty's got somethin' for you;' 'n' I gave him the dinner; 'n' he says, 'Ma 'll be very angry,' 'n' I says, 'Let her, then!' I was so mad I did n't care what I said, 'n' he set down an' et

it — but this won't make cream short-cake," she interrupted herself, rushing into the pantry.

In a moment she came out, with a pan of flour and other things, and proceeded to mix up the short-cake, talking all the time.

"You see, dearie," she went on, "I've had my share o' trouble; before I took to keepin' boarders — long ago when I was a girl 'bout your size — I was allus in some sort of a scrape."

Barbara thought of the paper basket in her own life and was silent.

"One thing I remember particular," went on Mrs. Blake, rubbing the butter into the flour vigorously. "It's funny now — but it was n't funny then, I tell you. You see I was home at mother's, — she had a farm down in York state where you come from, — an' we had a hog that would come into the cellar every time the door was left open; an' one day father bro't home some herrin', 'n' it was more 'n we could eat, 'n' mother says to me, says she, 'Sarah, you just carry 'em down cellar 'n' smoke

'em 'n' they 'll be nice.' So I takes a three-gallon jar — a tall old-fashioned one with a little neck to the top, 'n' I carried the herrin' down 'n' sets the jar in the place we set such things, 'n' I went out for somethin' —"

Here Mrs. Blake went to the pantry for a rolling-pin, rolled out the short-cake into a big square shape, put it into a baking-pan, and shoved it into the oven, Barbara looking on with the greatest interest. Then washing her hands, Mrs. Blake proceeded to set the table and went on with her story: —

"Well, do you know I had n't hardly got out when that hog come in and went right for the jar an' stuck her head in! 'n' could n't git it out! When I come I found her and scared her so she started to run up the steps to git out with that jar on her head, an' she run all over the place an' banged against fences 'n' well curb 'n' barn door before the jar broke, o' course scatterin' herrin' all over the place, 'n' I was so mad I could 'v' killed her, 'n' I says, 'I bate you I 'll cure that hog o' comin' in my cellar;' so the next time she

come I was a scaldin' milk pans — we had thirty cows 'n' o' course a lot o' milk an' many pans to wash, 'n' I allus washed 'em in a tub out doors, so's not to sozzle all over the kitchen floor — seems as if she 'd come a purpose — so I ups with a handful o' water an' I sprinkles her good. Did n't much hit her, but she did holler an' run for a mud puddle, an' flops into that 'n' father says, 'Sarah, what's the matter with the hog?' an' says I, 'Just let her come into my cellar again 'n' she 'll find out. I ain't a-goin' to have no hog comin' into my cellar.'"

Barbara laughed. "Did she ever come in again?"

"No, she never did, an' that fall she went into the pork barrel. But I had a worse time a year or two ago with another hog; hogs are the worst critters, I do believe! I had set bread arisin' on the stove hearth, and Blake he 'd picked a bushel o' pears for a man to carry over to brother John's, 'n' I 'd just done a churnin' 'n' had two pails o' buttermilk: well, I 'd forgot entirely that Blake 'd put a sheep

in the orchard that was all for runnin' away — the day before he 'd spent half a day runnin' after it; well, after a few minutes I looked out 'n' there was that sheep a-runnin' for life, 'n' I never thought of nothin' but savin' him a chase, so I runs out 'n' left my kitchen door open — great gump that I was! Well, that very day Blake 'd let out an old hog 'n' five pigs — but they was most as big as she was — 'n' after I run f'r the sheep awhile I suddenly remembered I 'd left the door open 'n' I turned — says I, 'Legs, do your duty,' 'n' I ran hard as ever I could. There! I had n't been gone ten minutes — mout 'v' been fifteen, but I don't think it were — 'n' them hogs had upset the bushel o' pears 'n' the buttermilk 'n' had got my two loaves o' bread into the mess on the floor. Well, I stood 'n' looked. I never was so mad in my life — I could 'a' killed 'em easy — 'n' just then the butcher came in 'n' says he, 'Miss Blake, I do pity ye! what 'd ye do when ye come in? did ye laugh or cry?' says he, 'n' I says, 'Well, I know the devil got into a hog, 'n' I don't believe he ever got out.' "

At this moment Uncle Karl and Mr. Blake came in, and Mrs. Blake burst out, —

"Well now, Mr. Burton, I guess I've nigh about talked your niece to death; I've been goin' on f'r all I'm worth, but you see I don't often get a chance to let out now-days, 'n' when you say boarder to me I just boil over," and she ended with a hearty laugh in which Barbara and Uncle Karl joined.

Then going to the stove she drew out the short-cake. It was light and brown, and the top all scored in squares. She turned it out on the table and broke it up into the squares as it was marked, splitting them as if to butter them. Then she put each piece into a saucepan on the stove, which was half full of steaming hot cream — thick and rich. As the pieces were properly soaked she lifted them out and piled them on a platter, and then they sat down to tea. The table was already loaded with good things, which she had put on while telling her story; two or three kinds of pie, four kinds of cake, several kinds of preserves, and sweet pickles and cream cheese, etc.

The cream short-cake proved to be so delicious that Barbara did not want to eat anything else, though Mrs. Blake placed a double row of little dishes around her plate, each one having something most tempting.

"Mrs. Blake 's a master hand for pies," said Uncle Karl after he had eaten two pieces, "and every one 's better than the others; one never knows where to leave off; I don't wonder you have a houseful of boarders every summer; you must make hundreds of pies in a season."

"One year," said Mrs. Blake, "I did try to keep count, 'n' I got up to near four hundred, 'n' then I got clear tuckered out with some folks with a packle o' young ones 't I never could fill up, 'n' I lost count 'n' near took to my bed."

CHAPTER XII

A BEAR IN CAMP

"Ain't Harris sugerin' off to-night?" Mrs. Blake asked her husband at the supper table.

"Yes, he told me he was," was the answer, and Mrs. Blake turned to Barbara, —

"Did you ever see a sugarin' off, dearie?"

"No," said Barbara. "What is it?"

"Why, it's up in the sugar bush where they boils the sap down to sugar; just before it sugars it's very nice to eat; young folks is mostly very fond of it. Blake, you can hitch up 'n' take 'em over, can't you?"

"Yes, I can," answered Mr. Blake, "if they wants to go."

"Should you like to go, Barbara?" asked her uncle.

"Yes, if you 'll go too," she said eagerly.

"Of course I 'll go; I like maple wax myself, though it 's years since I had any — not since I was a boy, I believe."

As soon as it was dark Mr. Blake drove up to the door with a big lumber wagon and two farm horses to draw it. There was only one seat stuck up high in front, and Barbara was half afraid to get up there. She begged Uncle Karl to let her ride on the straw which half filled the wagon-box.

"Oh, yes," cried Mrs. Blake from the door, "let her sit in the little chair in the straw; that 'll be nicer 'n' warmer too," and she hastened to bring out a small child's chair which had belonged to their only son, now a young man of eighteen.

Barbara was tucked in warmly with shawls and a buffalo-skin robe, and Uncle Karl climbed up to the high seat beside Mr. Blake, and off they went.

After a mile or two of riding they turned into a woods road through the trees, and there the snow had not melted away as it had outside.

Before long they saw light shining between the trees, and Uncle Karl called to Barbara that they were almost there. In a moment

the wagon stopped and Barbara found herself before a big blazing fire, with a woman and two girls standing beside a great kettle, which was steaming and sending out a delicious odor.

"Where's Harris?" called Mr. Blake.

"He had to go to the farm for more pans," said Mrs. Harris. "He'll be back soon; won't you light?"

"I've brought a young city girl and her uncle to see a sugarin' off, 'n' I'll just drive back 'n' meet Harris," said Mr. Blake.

"He'll take it very kind of you — an' the young lady is welcome," said Mrs. Harris. "Did you never see a sugar camp, miss?" she asked as Barbara drew near the great kettle which one of the girls was watching.

"No; is that going to be maple sugar?" asked Barbara.

"Yes; it's most done now. Tilly," turning to her daughter, "get some snow and offer the young lady some wax. Young folks is mostly fond of wax," she added to Barbara.

In a minute or two the girl brought to

Barbara a plate packed hard with snow, on which she had dropped out of the kettle several little dabs of the boiling sap. These had spread out and hardened, and Barbara found them so delicious that she ate them all, and the smiling girl, about her own age, filled her plate again.

"You like it so well," said Mrs. Harris, "should you like a cake of it to take home?"

"Oh, yes!" cried Barbara.

"Well, I'll make you one," said Mrs. Harris, and as good as her word she made a little cake and set it out in the snow to cool.

"Aren't you afraid to stay out here alone?" asked Barbara, when she had eaten all she could of the delicious wax and was sitting beside Uncle Karl on a log.

"Why, no," said Mrs. Harris, "there's nothing to be afraid of; coyotes come around sometimes, but they're easily scared away. We have once or twice had a bear come about. Bears, you know, love sugar awfully and sometimes they upset the sap buckets, they're such clumsy great things!"

"Ma," whispered one of the girls at this moment, "I surely hear something moving over that way."

"Nonsense!" said her mother. "You're always hearin' bugars."

"But there is something!" cried Barbara excitedly. "I hear it! Oh, Uncle Karl!" and she laid hold of her uncle's arm in terror.

"There — there!" said Uncle Karl soothingly. "Don't be scared, girlie! If there is anything, the worst it can be in these woods is a bear, and he'll be after the sugar and not us."

"It *is* a bear! and he's coming this way!" shrieked the girl who had first heard it, and she scampered into the little cabin where they lived while making sugar. "Come in, everybody!" she cried as she ran.

"Yes, come in!" said Mrs. Harris, now frightened herself. "If I only had a gun!" she added. "Could you shoot it, mister?" turning to Uncle Karl.

"I might perhaps," said Uncle Karl, "but I'd rather see it alive;" for Uncle Karl was

not alone an artist—he had a special love for all animal life, and his best pictures were of animals. He could put life and expression into the drawing of an animal that few could equal.

"Oh, come in!" cried Barbara, as he lingered, hoping to see Bruin. To please her he went to the cabin, and while the rest of the party were inside, he stood at the open door, gazing eagerly into the lighted space around the fire.

"Come in! Come in!" cried Barbara, pulling at his coat sleeve.

"Wait, girlie!" he said quietly. "I can come in quick enough if he comes this way; but I want to see him."

The bear, shuffling along, now came in plain sight, and looking out of the one little window they could see him sniffing about the great kettle. But the fire evidently did not please him, and he moved along uneasily, Uncle Karl perfectly absorbed in looking at him.

"Oh, he's coming!" cried Barbara in terror, trying to drag Uncle Karl within.

But Uncle Karl shook her off, saying almost sternly for him, "Go in yourself if you 're afraid! I want to see what he 'll do," and gently pushing her into the cabin, he closed the door — himself outside.

"Oh, Uncle Karl!" cried Barbara wildly. But Mrs. Harris said quietly, "You need n't be so scared, miss. The bear won't touch anybody, not while there 's sugar about. What I'm afraid of, is that he 'll meddle with that hot kettle and upset it — I 've heard of such things," and she looked anxiously out the small window, muttering in low tones, "I wisht I had the gun! it was stupid to forget it."

Meanwhile the hungry fellow outside was snuffing around, evidently wild for that sugar, but as plainly afraid of the fire; probably he had had some experience with fire before. Suddenly he came upon something that interested him, and Mrs. Harris, watching him, eagerly cried out,—

"Thank goodness! He 's found that cake o' wax! That 'll give him something to do."

And it did! The teeth of the great beast closed upon the stiffened mass, and for an instant Bruin was happy. But only for an instant —for on trying to bite, he found his teeth locked in the wax and not to be got out. He shook his head violently, and then Barbara heard a laugh from Uncle Karl, who pushed open the door, crying, "Now if you want to see some fun, come out here, all of you!"

Mrs. Harris hurried out, but Barbara stood in the door, ready to dodge back inside if the bear came towards them. She soon saw, however, that he had enough business of his own to keep him from troubling himself about other people.

He could n't have been funnier if he had been performing for their amusement, and Uncle Karl roared with laughter at his droll antics. He turned somersets; he rolled over and over; he whirled round and round like a crazy top; he almost stood on his head; he lay on his back and savagely pawed the air with all four legs, all the time frantically brushing with his huge paws the side of his

face, trying to rid himself of his too-too-sweet mouthful.

Now and then he stood up on his hind legs and beat and clawed at his face, waving his arms and looking like a man gone crazy.

"Poor fellow!" said Barbara in the pauses of laughing, "I wonder if he'll ever get it off!"

"Oh, it won't hurt him," said Uncle Karl, "for it'll gradually soften and be swallowed. It won't hurt him — if he only knew it — unless he bangs himself against a tree in his frenzy."

"He's smeared it all over his eyes with his paws," said Barbara. "I don't believe he can see."

"Oh, I wish that gun was here!" said Mrs. Harris eagerly. "You could shoot him, could n't you, Mr. Burton?"

"I might be able to," said Uncle Karl, "but I would n't for anything!"

"Why not?" asked Mrs. Harris. "Bear's meat is very good, and the skin makes a fine robe."

"Don't you think it would be taking a mean advantage of a poor fellow in distress?" asked Uncle Karl, who was every bit an artist and animal-lover, and not a bit of a hunter.

"But he stole my wax," urged Mrs. Harris, somewhat surprised at this new way of looking at a bear.

"How did he know it was yours?" asked Uncle Karl. "Perhaps he thought it was put there on purpose for him. He loves sweets like the rest of us, and I don't suppose he has been taught the Ten Commandments."

That was another new thought to Mrs. Harris, and she found nothing to say in answer to it.

Just then the wagon was heard coming back, with much noise of jingling harness and wheels screeching in the snow. The bear heard it too, and at once started running away from it — still clawing at his jaws, and bumping against the trees in his way.

"John," called Mrs. Harris as they drew near, "did you think to bring the gun?"

"By Jiminy! I clean forgot it!" replied Mr. Harris.

"Well, you've lost a chance to get a bear-skin," said Uncle Karl pleasantly, "and we've had enough fun out of the poor fellow to pay for the wax."

"I'm so glad he didn't bring it!" said Barbara in a whisper in Uncle Karl's ear.

It was now getting late, and Uncle Karl and Barbara, thinking they had enjoyed enough for one day, climbed into the wagon and drove back to Mrs. Blake's.

That good woman had ready a nice lunch for them, and when they had eaten a little to please her, and started for bed, the tall old clock in the hall struck two.

"Good night, girlie!" said Uncle Karl as they parted for the night. "Have you had a good day?"

"Splendid!" cried Barbara with shining eyes, following Mrs. Blake into the room prepared for her.

It was a queer little room, with the queerest furniture Barbara had ever seen, every

piece a hundred years old; but the bed astonished her. It was an enormous structure with a tall post at each corner and a canopy over the whole; and the bed itself was so high that she did n't see how she should get into it.

"Why, Mrs. Blake," she said timidly, "that bed 's so high, — how shall I climb into it?"

"You don't want to climb," said Mrs. Blake, "because it 's feathers; you want to get right into the middle. I guess you better step on a chair and jump in. Then you 'll be all snug and cozy — I used to love to do that when I was young and spry; you can leave your candle burning so you can see to get in, and I 'll come in and get it."

As she spoke Mrs. Blake carefully turned back the bedclothes ready for the plunge.

When Barbara was undressed she did as she was bid, and from a chair at the bedside she sprang into the very middle of the feathery sea, where she sank down almost out of sight. Drawing the bedding up around her, she was asleep almost as soon as she touched the pil-

low, and she did not know when Mrs. Blake came in to take the candle.

"Did you sleep well, girlie?" asked Uncle Karl the next morning when they met on the stairs on their way to breakfast.

"Oh, splendidly!" cried Barbara. "I had a regular feather nest — like a bird's nest!"

"Well, I'm glad you enjoyed it," said Uncle Karl rather ruefully. "I had one like it, and I didn't sleep a wink; I was fairly smothered."

The breakfast was like the supper, with the addition of warm griddle-cakes and coffee, and the omission of the cream shortcake, and before ten o'clock Old Charley was brought out, and Uncle Karl and Barbara started for home. They did not take a dish-pan dinner at the Quinns', for Mrs. Blake had put up for them a bountiful luncheon, which they ate in the wagon, while Charley — half-unharnessed — took his from a box, which the same good hostess had provided.

"Wife," said Uncle Karl that evening when they sat at the supper-table, "Barbara

has had some lessons in table manners since we left home; I expect she'll astonish the down-easters, when she goes back, with her expertness with the knife; we dined with Farmer Quinn on our way."

"Now Uncle Karl!" protested Barbara.

"Humph!" said Aunt Betty with disgust. "I never could bear to see pigs eat!"

CHAPTER XIII

IN A BLIZZARD

"WIFE," said Uncle Karl one morning at the breakfast-table, laying down a letter he had just read, "I shall have to go up to Milltown to settle that business after all; I can't put it off any longer."

"I knew you ought to go a long time ago," said Aunt Betty.

"I know you did," said Uncle Karl meekly; "but I never seem to get time to do it; now I must."

Barbara listened eagerly; Uncle Karl's going away was something she could not endure the thought of; now she broke in.

"Where is it you're going, Uncle Karl? Let me go too!"

"Why, girlie, I'd love to take you if it was summer; it's a pretty ride away up in the hills about fifty miles off; but now—"

"Oh, I 'm sure it will be nice now!" urged Barbara. "Do you go in a carriage?"

"No; in a stage. I 'm afraid," he added doubtfully, "I 'm afraid there may be some snow left in the hills; it hangs on there long after the prairies are bare."

"That would n't make any difference," said Barbara. "I love to take stage journeys. Do let me go, Uncle Karl!"

There was something in her tone that warned Uncle Karl that she would n't be very happy without him, for although she had got over her first dread of Aunt Betty and her ways, she never felt really at home in the house; her whole happiness was in the studio. He felt that having taken her away from her home he was bound to keep her well and contented; so he hesitated.

"I should think it a very foolish trip for a young girl to take," said Aunt Betty grimly; "but there 's no folly you two are n't capable of committing. You 're about as much of a child as she is," — nodding at her husband half seriously as she rose to leave the room.

"I know," said Uncle Karl doubtfully; "it may be very foolish—" and he hesitated, while, Aunt Betty having closed the door, Barbara sprang up and threw her arms around his neck.

"Please — please, Uncle Karl!" she cried coaxingly. "You know I can't be left alone here!"

Uncle Karl could not resist longer. "Well, girlie," he said, "if you 'll take the risk of a hard trip — though I hope it won't prove so — why — why —" The end of the sentence was smothered in Barbara's eager kisses, and so the matter was settled.

The next morning found the two travelers waiting for the stage, which had been ordered to call for them. The weather was still cold, and Aunt Betty had insisted that if Barbara would go, she should have wraps enough to be comfortable. So, although Barbara protested almost to the point of tears, she was forced to yield to her aunt's good sense, and be clothed in the warmest things of her own, with a few of her aunt's over them.

Worst of all was a great hood which Aunt Betty said positively she should not go without, and Uncle Karl was obliged to agree with her that the summer-like hats Barbara had brought from home were no protection against the sharp winds of Minnesota.

Hating it with all her heart, Barbara was yet obliged to wear it, or give up the trip, as Uncle Karl was, for once, firm against coaxing. So it was a very cross face that looked away from Aunt Betty and would n't say good-by, when the stage drove up to the door.

This vehicle was the old-fashioned sort, and the choice seat in fine weather is that beside the driver, where all the country can be seen, and there is plenty of fresh air. This seat Uncle Karl had taken for Barbara and himself.

"Uncle Karl," said Barbara, as she stood by the wheel looking up at the seat so high above her head, "I 'm afraid I can't climb up to that seat," — with all these people looking on, she might have added, for if she had

been alone she would not have hesitated, but taking such a climb before spectators rather scared her.

"Would you rather go inside?" asked Uncle Karl.

"Oh, no; if I can get up there."

"What! such a little climber as you used to be?" said Uncle Karl, laughing. "Don't you see the steps? You put your first foot here — the next one there — the driver will give you a hand, and I'll be here to catch you if you fall." Barbara, seeing that he was joking her, boldly put her foot where he had showed her; seized the stout hand held down to her; Uncle Karl gave her a lift; and the next minute she dropped into the seat beside the driver, breathless but happy. In a moment Uncle Karl, who was rather stout, puffing and blowing from the exertion of the climb, took his seat beside her, and they were off.

"There, girlie! isn't this fine!" he said as they passed out of the little town and struck into the open country.

"Splendid!" said Barbara, at once forget-

ting the hateful hood. "I'm so glad you got these seats."

After two or three hours' pleasant riding over the smooth prairie, it began to cloud up, and Uncle Karl said, "It looks a little like snow, does n't it, driver?"

"It does that," said the driver, a little anxiously, "and there 's a plenty snow now back in the hills. I had hard enough work getting through yesterday."

"Well, perhaps it 'll hold off a while," said Uncle Karl cheerfully.

"Maybe," said the driver. "Get up, Bill!"

But it did n't hold off; the clouds came nearer, and in an hour or so it began to snow.

"I guess you better go inside, girlie," said Uncle Karl.

"Oh, no; a little snow won't hurt me," said Barbara, "and I do love to see it snow!"

"Humph!" said the driver; "you would n't if you had to drive through the hills ahead there!"

Faster and faster came the snow, and more and more the driver urged his horses. Soon

Uncle Karl and Barbara were mounds of snow and had to keep brushing it away from eyes and mouth.

"How far is it to Swift's?" asked Uncle Karl after a while.

"A mile or two yet," said the driver; "but I shan't stop there for dinner to-day. I must get through before dark — if I get through at all," he added, muttering to himself.

When they reached Swift's, the usual dining-place, the horses were changed and Uncle Karl and Barbara got inside the coach. Dinner was ready in the little inn, but the driver would n't wait, so the passengers took what they could carry from the table and hurried back into the stage, the driver being already in his seat and calling them to hurry up.

"Now, girlie," said Uncle Karl, "what a pity we have n't some of those nice lunch-boxes along!"

Barbara burst into a laugh, which was what Uncle Karl wanted, for he thought she looked anxious.

Soon they reached the hills, and found that

the driver had not exaggerated. The side of the track was piled high with snow, and the fresh snow falling so fast made the roads very heavy.

The horses first fell to a walk, then — as it grew worse and worse — they floundered and struggled, often stopped short and refused to go on, till after a little rest the driver urged them again.

"This looks pretty bad," said one of the passengers on the back seat. "It 'minds me of the time I got snowed-up 'way back in Michigan in '49. There warn't no hills neither — but you couldn't see your hand before you, and the horses — no, mules they was — couldn't keep the road."

"What did you do?" asked another passenger.

"Why, we just camped out in the sleigh," said the first speaker. "The country was all wild then and there warn't no houses anywhere about."

"I should 'a' thought you 'd 'a' froze," said the other.

"Oh, no! we made ourselves dens in the deep snow and did n't suffer much from cold — but we did nigh about starve — for not a thing could we get to eat. Jiminy! did n't supper taste good when we got to a farmhouse after two days' hard work!"

"Uncle Karl," whispered Barbara, "what 'll we do if we get stuck in the snow?"

"Well," said Uncle Karl cheerfully, "we 'll hunt around and find some farmhouse where we can stay."

"But if there is n't any farmhouse?" persisted Barbara.

"Well" — he hesitated — "then we 'll camp out in the stage, and think about the lunch-boxes we did n't bring along."

Barbara laughed.

"And if worst comes to worst — why, we need n't really starve — we can eat one of the horses."

"Oh, Uncle Karl!" cried Barbara, "how dreadful!"

"Why so?" asked Uncle Karl half seriously. "We eat cows — why not horses? But I don't

think we 'll come to that," he added, just as the driver came to the door.

"I 'm plum stuck here," he said gruffly. "My cattle can't go a step further. I think Joe Jansen's cabin is down the road a piece. You can go down there and take what you can get — I guess not very much, though — or you can stick by the coach — as I shall — till it moderates, or they send help from the barn."

"What is the prospect for that?" asked Uncle Karl.

"Well, to be honest," said the driver, "I don't suppose they 'll worry about us till morning, and they could n't possibly get to us — with all the help and horses they can get — before noon to-morrow. I think your little gal," looking at Barbara's staring eyes, "would be better off if you could get to Joe's. He 's a decent fellow enough, and he has a decent wife, I believe — and soon 's the road 's open you could take the next stage through."

"How far is it to Joe's?" asked Uncle Karl; "and how shall we find it?"

"You go back on the road a piece — maybe half a mile," said the driver, "and when you come to a road to the right — though I do' know 's you can see any road now," he interrupted himself — "anyway — if you *do* find it, maybe you 'll see Joe's tracks; he mostly goes to the tavern back there every day. His cabin is down that road a little — maybe you 'll see the light — it 's getting dark now."

He went back to his horses, and the passengers began to discuss the question of starting out in the storm to find Joe's, or sticking to the coach, with the certainty of a cold, hungry night.

"What do you say, girlie?" asked Uncle Karl at last. "Which would you rather do?"

"Oh, let 's go for the cabin," she cried eagerly. "I 'm tired to death of sitting still, and I 'm sure I should be dead before morning."

Uncle Karl smiled. "It takes more than sitting up all night to kill one," he said; "but I do believe it 's our best chance to go for the cabin. At any rate, if we don't find it we can come back."

Three of the passengers agreed with Uncle Karl, and at last they set off in a party — two men and one woman, with Uncle Karl and Barbara.

First, however, Uncle Karl looked at Barbara's light traveling boots, — for Aunt Betty had not thought of their being obliged to walk, — and then without a word he got his valise out of the back of the coach, opened it, took out a pair of woolen socks, and in spite of Barbara's protest that her feet were not cold, and she could walk very well with her shoes — he insisted on drawing them on over her shoes. Then they all started off.

CHAPTER XIV

THE FRIENDLY LOG CABIN

THEIR first plunge into the snow showed them the difficulty the poor horses had to drag them even so far as this. The snow was very deep and dry, — almost like flour, — so that it was very hard to get through it.

After struggling along what seemed a half-mile, they began to look for a road, but the air was full of snow and it was getting dark. Never would they have found it if Barbara had not seen a faint light. Hanging on her uncle's arm, she was not obliged to pick her way as the rest were, and so she was the first to see the light, away off to the right.

"Oh, Uncle Karl!" she cried joyfully, "there's a light!"

With fresh courage the little party turned towards the welcome sign, and struggled on. They could find no road, but they fought their way inch by inch, often falling into drifts,

again coming against fences or rocks, or something which they had to go around. But at last, when it seemed as if they could n't go half a dozen steps farther, they came near enough to see that their beacon light was in the window of a low house. Feeling along the wall till he came to a door, Uncle Karl knocked.

"Who 's there?" called a woman's voice.

"A party of travelers from the stage; let us in, please," answered Uncle Karl.

"I don't keep no tavern," said the voice.

"Oh, for God's sake, woman, let us in!" cried one of the men. "Here 's women and children suffering out here in this storm."

"Oh, do!" sobbed the woman, who was nearly exhausted.

At that the lock was undone and the door opened. A thin-faced, hungry-looking woman stood there.

"If there 's women and children," she said anxiously, "I can't refuse — but my husband has n't got back, and I 'm worried about him — and I can't let in a lot of strange men."

"Certainly you could n't," said Uncle Karl, in his pleasant manner, which seemed to reassure her at once. "But you see the stage is stuck, up on the hills, and we had to stay there all night, or beg your hospitality."

"Oh, come right in," said the woman, catching sight of Barbara and the woman outside. "It 's little enough I can do for you — but at least it 's better than out in the snow."

It was a dismal little log cabin of one room into which they went. A very small fire burned on the hearth; a bed stood on one side; a table and two chairs on the other, and that was almost all the place contained. Barbara looked around in dismay. "Oh, Uncle Karl," she whispered, "we can't stay here!"

"We can be very thankful, my dear," he said quietly, "to have a roof over our heads, and not be lying out in the snow to freeze, or to sleep ourselves to death before morning. And I 'm sure," he went on gently, "my girlie is too sensible to be silly over the discomforts of one night."

This was the most like a reproof that Uncle

Karl had ever given to Barbara, and it made her see how childish she had been. She squeezed his hand affectionately by way of saying she was sorry, and said no more.

Meanwhile the party grouped itself around the fire, which the woman replenished with a stick or two, and then she returned to her watch at the window, for she was plainly very anxious. Uncle Karl noticed this, and said quietly: —

"As soon as we thaw out a little, madam, we 'll go out and look for your husband."

"Oh, if you would!" she cried. "He never stayed so late before! I'm nearly crazy. I wish I had more chairs to offer you," she went on, seeing their dilemma, "but you must do the best you can."

"Well, ma'am," said one of the men, "we 'll leave the chairs to the ladies, and sit on the floor — if you 'll let us;" and without waiting for her consent he dropped on the floor as if he had sat on floors all his life. The other man followed, and the woman took a chair, leaving the other chair for Uncle Karl and Barbara.

As soon as they were warm, Uncle Karl

asked the woman — Mrs. Jansen — if she had a lantern, and on her getting one and lighting the lamp inside he said : —

" Now, men, shall we go out and look up our host ? "

Both men rose, and taking the lantern Uncle Karl started ahead, first turning to Barbara, who stared at him in horror of his leaving her, and whispered : —

" Now, girlie, show yourself the brave little girl you are. Stay here and see that the light is kept bright in the window, and all will be well ; " and turning he left with the men.

" Oh ! " cried the anxious woman, turning to Barbara, " how kind your father is ! "

" My uncle," interrupted Barbara.

" Well, whatever he is," said Mrs. Jansen warmly, " he 's an angel — I 'll say that ! "

" Yes, he is ! " assented Barbara, " the best man in the world."

" I believe you," said Mrs. Jansen.

Meanwhile the men were struggling towards the road, keeping the window in sight, and waving their lantern and shouting as they went.

Not fifty feet from the house Uncle Karl stumbled over something, which, as he rose, he saw to his horror was a man, apparently asleep.

"Here, men!" he called, "here he is — we must carry him in."

The two men took hold of the unconscious figure, and Uncle Karl went ahead with the lantern to show the path, and in ten minutes they were back in the cabin and laid their burden on the bed.

The woman was nearly wild, for she thought he was dead; but the men, used to the cold of that country, soon found that he was only stupefied. "Though, if we had n't found him," said one, "he would never have stirred again."

"Oh," cried the wife, wringing her hands, "what can I ever do for you! You have saved his life — and he's all I have in the world."

"Well," said Uncle Karl, "he *is* saved, and the best you can do for us is to give us something to eat if you can. We have had no dinner — to speak of — and anything will be welcome." The others joined in the request.

CHAPTER XV

ONLY POTATOES TO EAT

At this request Mrs. Jansen at first looked embarrassed, but in a moment she spoke.

"I'll do the best I can for you, but to tell the truth we have almost nothing ourselves. Joe went to-day to get something—I suppose you did n't see anything when you found him," she added anxiously.

"His coat pocket seems to have something in it," said one of the men who had been working over him. Eagerly the woman searched his pockets and found a small package of meal.

She seized the package with an air of relief and hurried to the fireplace, where she hung a kettle over the fire and half filled it with water. As soon as it was hot she opened the package of meal and began to sprinkle it into the water.

Barbara watched her with deep interest as she added salt and stirred and beat the boil-

ing mass, which began to send out a delicious odor.

After a while she said it was done, and lifting off the kettle she set it on the hearth to cool. Then going to a shelf at the back of the cabin she brought out two bowls, and two cups and saucers, with only two spoons, however. This was scanty allowance for six people, but, as they were thankful for anything, nothing was said.

With a tin dipper she ladled out the smoking mush into the dishes she had brought, and, setting them on the table, asked her guests to help themselves, saying, "I guess you 'll have to take turns with the spoons — it 's all I have."

Uncle Karl, who seemed naturally to be speaker and actor for the party, gave the spoons to the woman passenger and Mrs. Jansen, who at first would not take it, till he insisted, saying that he should make spoons for the rest. He then took from his pocket a small package of letters, opened one that had a clean sheet inside, and with a deft twist

of his handy fingers made a neat little scoop, which he handed to Barbara with a merry twinkle in his eye.

"Now, girlie," he said, "see how well you can eat with a scoop."

With a laugh Barbara tried it, and found it worked very well. Meanwhile Uncle Karl had made two more which he offered to the two passengers. Soon they had all filled themselves with the welcome food, and began to think of sleep.

Arrangements for the night were soon made; the men lay down on the floor before the fire, while the woman passenger and Barbara lay on the bed. Uncle Karl sat on the floor beside Barbara and laid his head against the bed close to her, for she could n't bear to have him away.

The master of the house, who had now recovered, sat up in a chair, tilting it back on two legs against the wall, while the mistress, taking the business of keeping the fire going, sat up in the other chair.

Thus they passed the night, and woke in

the morning to find the little log cabin almost buried in drifts of snow, and the storm still raging.

The situation was now gloomy enough: there was nothing to eat; and it was impossible to get anywhere without the probability of perishing on the way. Joe and his wife had a whispered consultation outside the door, and then Joe came forward and said: —

"Friends, the last thing — and the only thing I have on earth — that you can eat, is a bushel of potatoes buried out behind the house. I was keeping them for seed next spring," he went on, "but — but — " he hesitated.

Uncle Karl broke in heartily. "Let us have the potatoes! We 'll see that you have all the seed potatoes you want. Of course," looking around at the men, "you have saved our lives, I feel sure, and we shall all pay you according to our ability. That so?" turning to the others.

There was a cheerful chorus, "Of course we will."

"We'll pay board right along," said one, at once searching his pockets for money, of which he drew out a handful. "This was n't much use to starving and freezing people last night, but it'll come in handy for seed potatoes in the spring."

Now a more cheerful air pervaded the room; the prospect of potatoes was heartening.

Taking a shovel, Joe started out to open his hoard of potatoes. The two men followed, and taking turns at the frozen earth, they succeeded at last in reaching the store, which they brought into the house to keep it from freezing.

Potatoes! Barbara had always despised this humble vegetable, never touched one when she could help it, and never unless it had plenty of butter or cream; but nothing ever tasted so good to her as these potatoes roasted in the ashes before the fire, and eaten from their own skins with nothing but salt on them.

While the storm raged the little party in the log cabin passed their time in roasting

potatoes, keeping up a good fire, and taking turns at keeping a way open to the main road where they could see when a stage got there.

It was the second morning that the sun came out clear and bright, and the prisoners in the cabin began to take hope, and to wonder what had become of the stage and its passengers. The two men, with Joe for guide, decided to make their way back to Swift's tavern to take the first stage that went through, and Joe promised to bring provisions to make his three guests more comfortable till the stage road was fully open.

So it came to pass that Uncle Karl and Barbara stayed three or four days in that little log cabin in the hills. After Joe came back with other things to eat besides potatoes, with tin plates and spoons enough to go around, so that they could have meals in a little more civilized way, they cheered up and grew very sociable.

Joe brought in some boxes for seats, and they amused themselves telling stories, guessing conundrums, — of which Uncle Karl knew

dozens, and could make them up besides, — and above all, looking at the pictures which Uncle Karl's ever-ready hand drew all over the walls of the cabin, with bits of charcoal from the fire.

On the fifth day, soon after noon, the welcome sound of the stage horn called them to the main road, where that vehicle, with six horses and its familiar driver, was waiting for them.

Uncle Karl, having given Mrs. Jansen a goodly roll of bills, and thanked her heartily besides, started off after Barbara, when the woman's voice recalled him.

"Come again! Come again! I shall miss you awfully."

The six fresh horses drew them quickly and safely to the town of Milltown, where Uncle Karl took rooms at the little country tavern, transacted his business, and made ready to take the stage the next morning for home.

They found Aunt Betty a good deal worried by their long absence, and the reports that had reached her of the storm in the hills. But Uncle Karl assured her that they had a jolly

time, and Barbara declared she was awfully glad she had gone, adding repentantly, "And the hood *was* comfortable, Aunt Betty."

"Humph!" said Aunt Betty, "young folks sometimes find out that old folks do know something."

CHAPTER XVI

BARBARA'S BIRTHDAY

Barbara had now been several months at Uncle Karl's and had learned to accustom herself to the household ways of her aunt. She could make a bed as neatly as Mary herself, and she had trained herself to keep her own things in the house always in order — never to leave anything around, and above all to wage constant war upon the flies. Now being winter, however, those persistent little creatures had lived out their troublesome short lives and disappeared, so that more light was allowed in the house, though the blessed sun was as carefully shut out as ever, lest his too warm rays should fade the carpets and curtains.

Living so much in the studio, Barbara found it easy to do as Aunt Betty wished in the house, and, finding her so docile, her aunt had come to be very fond of her, — a regard

which was mutual, for Aunt Betty, in spite of her strenuous housekeeping, was really a kind-hearted woman with many admirable qualities.

Soon after the adventure in the snow Barbara's birthday came on. She had not mentioned it, for she did not want to seem to ask for anything. They might not have remembered it, but about a week before that day Uncle Karl had received a package by express from home to be given to Barbara on her birthday.

He said nothing to Barbara about it, but went quietly to work to honor the day. Barbara saw that some mystery was on foot, for Uncle Karl, who was open as the day and never had any secrets to keep, was so mysterious and so full of glee over something that she could n't help noticing it.

Also on two evenings when she had gone to her room to go to bed, she had noticed a light in the studio much later than usual, and she wondered, and was a little bit hurt that Uncle Karl did not tell her what he was doing.

At last the morning dawned, and Barbara's first thought as she woke was that she was a year older than yesterday, and with the new dignity of fifteen upon her she went down to breakfast.

But what was that standing beside her plate? A small figure in clay — a model of the bear of the sugar camp — standing up like a man and waving his arms frantically about his head. The resemblance was perfect; Barbara recognized it at once, and guessed also in the same instant what had been the mystery with Uncle Karl.

Upon the neck of that dear uncle Barbara threw herself, kissing him and calling him the dearest uncle in the world, laughing, and to her surprise finding a few tears in her eyes.

Tears; not because she was unhappy — far from it; but the thought of the birthday brought up the memory of home and the dear ones, and though not homesick — well, perhaps you know how it is yourself!

After a few happy tears, Barbara seated her-

self at the table, laughing every time she looked at the little bear.

When breakfast was over, and Barbara had put her room in the order that Aunt Betty loved, she went to the studio as usual, hugging her bear in her arms, intending to put him on her little table where she could see him all day. But she found her table occupied, — a package, tightly tied, with glaring express labels on it.

"From home!" cried Barbara joyfully. "Oh, Uncle Karl!" turning to her dear uncle, as she always did, in joy or sorrow. "When did it come?"

"A few days ago, girlie," he said.

"And that's what made you so queer!" said she.

"Yes; I never could keep a secret," said Uncle Karl, "especially a pleasant one. Shall I cut the string?"

"Yes, please," said Barbara, placing her bear tenderly on the window-sill.

When the string was cut and the wrappings taken off, there appeared a box on top of

which lay a card with "Many happy returns" painted on it in gay colors.

Hastily Barbara lifted the cover; the box appeared full of packages, each tied up with ribbon and bearing a card. She took up a package and read the card, "From your loving friend May."

"Oh, that's from May," cried Barbara excitedly. "I wonder what it is?" She hastily removed the wrapping and brought to light a dainty embroidered silk bag and a loving note which she laid aside to read later.

Next came another package, a little larger, with the card of another school friend, and another note. So it went on; the box was filled with gifts from school friends and from home — each with a note or letter. As she got farther down in the box she found books and bigger things, and when the last article was opened the table and her chair were full and running over, with books and many pretty things, and Barbara sank into a chair, very still.

She had begun very lively and gay, but as

the loving messages multiplied they brought home and dear friends so strongly before her that she found herself — though very happy — very quiet.

Uncle Karl understood; he always did understand, that was what made him so dear. He broke in cheerfully: —

"Now, girlie, what a time you'll have answering all these letters! Want me to help you?"

"Yes," said Barbara, brightening up, for Uncle Karl's horror of letter-writing was well known. He would paint you a picture or make a sketch with delight — the brush was his right hand; but the pen was a serious matter to him. Once — long ago — when Barbara's mother was away from home and he wanted to tell her of the death of a pet bird, he took a card and sketched the whole story. There on the floor lay the bird on its back with legs in the air saying "dead" as plain as words. One side stood Maggie, the fat cook, with hands raised in horror. There was the mother anxiously bending over the dead pet,

and beside it, crouched on the floor and raining tears which flooded the carpet, was Cousin Julia — whose pet it was. The likenesses were so good that they were recognized at once and the whole story plain without a word. At the bottom was only the date; there was no need of signature, no one but Uncle Karl could do it.

Barbara remembered this story which her mother had told her, and it brought a hearty laugh which relieved the desire to cry.

Over her books, which Barbara now began to look at, she was in raptures. Nothing could please her so well as books; she fairly hugged them in her delight, reading their titles and the gift inscriptions, filled very full of happiness.

"Oh," she sighed at last, fairly weary with delight, "Uncle Karl, how lovely people are! how I shall love these books! And my dear little bear, too! he 's too cute for anything! It 's exactly like him, poor fellow! I wonder if he did get that horrid wax off before he killed himself!"

"Oh, no doubt he did," said Uncle Karl. "Wax is terribly sticky, but it doesn't last very long."

"Oh! I hope he got safely off! but wasn't he funny!" And both had another good laugh over his antics.

That was a happy day for Barbara, and it was not yet over. When they went to supper she found another surprise. This was Aunt Betty's,— a fine big birthday cake with fifteen wax candles burning around the edge; and Mary, not to be left out, presented a plate piled up with molasses candies — beautiful white sticks that made one's mouth water to look at, and of which Barbara was very fond.

CHAPTER XVII

THE CHILDREN'S SYMPHONY

After supper, when Barbara had cut her birthday cake, and offered her candy to Aunt Betty, who declined, — she never ate sweets, — and to Uncle Karl, who was fond of them as any schoolgirl, and helped her enjoy them, about half-past seven o'clock Uncle Karl said:

"We 're invited out this evening."

"Why, where?" cried Barbara; for in this little town social doings were almost unknown.

"To the house of Mr. Wallace, a Danish gentleman who has not been here very long, but is a charming old gentleman with snow-white hair and beautiful face. He always reminds me of his great countryman, Hans Andersen — though he does n't look at all like the pictures of the famous story-teller."

"If he can tell stories like Hans Andersen," said Barbara with enthusiasm, "I shall like him; I love those stories!"

"So do I, girlie!" said Uncle Karl warmly.

"Shall I change my dress, Aunt Betty?" asked Barbara, hesitating. "Had n't I better put on my blue merino?"

"Oh, no," said Aunt Betty. "It is n't a formal affair; your dress is all right."

"Won't you go too, wife?" asked Uncle Karl.

"No; I have some sewing I want to do," said Aunt Betty.

They were soon off, and five minutes' walk brought them to the house of Mr. Wallace. It was not a large house, and there were not many guests, perhaps a dozen of the neighbors, but the orchestra was a rather large one for the place, and their instruments were — some of them — very droll.

Of the usual sort of instruments there were a piano, three violins, and a violoncello. These were played by grown-ups. But besides these there were ten or twelve toy instruments in the hands of younger players — children, in fact.

Some of these youngsters had small tin

horns, such as boys nowadays delight to torture the air with; fifes there were, triangles and tambourines, and, to the delight of the small boy behind it, a drum with real drumsticks which he fairly ached to use. Besides these there was a "cuckoo toy," which shouted that word as enthusiastically as a brand-new cuckoo clock, a loud rattle in the hands of a stout youngster who looked quite equal to deafening the audience with it, and lastly — a glass bird-call, which, on being half filled with water and well blown, can be made to imitate bird notes very well.

Barbara was invited to take an instrument, but as she had n't practiced with the "band" and had no idea what they were going to do, she preferred to listen; but Uncle Karl accepted the responsibility of the "cuckoo," and entered into the spirit of the thing like a boy.

When all was ready the host rose, his tall, graceful figure clad in black velvet, which was more grand than had ever been seen in that little Western town, and began — in his brokeu English, and with the enthusiasm of the ro-

mance-loving Dane — to explain the "Kinder Symphonie," or in English "Children's Symphony."

He said: "My friends, in going to hear a grand symphony you generally have some printed programme telling what is meant by the music, — what every movement tries to say to you; and perhaps you may think it a little profane to have such a solemn and grand thing as a symphony performed on toy instruments. But it is not so; the children, as well as we, have a world of their own, a world of fairy tales and plays, of Christmas festivals and toys, and it is fitting that this child-world should be represented in music.

"Now in this which we shall give, you will find a child's story. We do not know what the author had in mind when he wrote it, but let us see what it says to us, and let us begin in the good old-fashioned way: —

"Once upon a time there was a contention between the Rattle and the Nightingale as to which could make the most noise. All the birds and animals had something to say about

it, and the discussion grew louder and louder, till all was confusion and noise, and nobody could be heard. This you will hear in the music.

"Despairing of coming to any decision, they decided to go to Leo, the king of beasts; so they started on a lively march which may represent this walk through the forest.

"Leo is very cross and growly and does n't like to be disturbed, and when the case is laid before him he does n't know what to say, so he, — like many other tyrants, — to get rid of bother, says gruffly: 'Let the Rattle and the Nightingale both be hanged.' Then everything is sad; a great wail arises and sweeps all through the forest; and this too you shall hear in the music.

"But after a while they resolve to try to coax Leo; so they all put on their most fascinating manners, and go dancing and tiptoeing through the woods — which you will hear in the dancing, light-tripping air.

"They come to Leo and they coax him; they sing their sweetest and look their pretti-

est, and so finally Leo gets softened and consigns the Rattle to a very warm place, and places him in the tail of a serpent who is henceforth called the rattlesnake; while the Nightingale goes up North and delights all the world with his song.

"Now listen and see if you do not hear all this in the music."

He then turned to his orchestra, waving his baton, and they began.

Such queer sounds! the harsh Rattle and the sweet Nightingale high above all; the roar of the lion (the rolling drum); the screaming of the fifes; and now and then the calm "Cuckoo! Cuckoo!" louder than all.

Such a funny medley as it was, and the performers funnier still! Such frantic efforts of the small players each to have his part heard; such cheeks puffed out over the horns; such mad shaking of the tambourine and beating of triangles! and louder and more savage than all, the terrific clatter of the Rattle into which broke often and loud the droll call "Cuckoo! Cuckoo!" But not all the crash-

ing and banging could drown the sweet notes of the bird-call rising high above everything.

The small but appreciative audience laughed till they were tired, but they could see that the music had really told the story they had heard.

After shaking hands warmly with the grand old Dane and thanking him heartily for the pleasure he had given them, Uncle Karl and Barbara went home; and so ended a very happy birthday.

CHAPTER XVIII

CONFIDENCES

BARBARA was very happy in her life in the studio, and after she had learned to appreciate and like Aunt Betty, nothing seemed wanting to her perfect content.

But back of all this was memory; the recollection of her unhappy home, — of Janet's exasperating ways, and her own mother's preference for Janet. Little things Janet had said and done would come back to her, and dread of going all over it again checked the longing she often felt for home and friends.

When she was not with Uncle Karl she would often brood over this trouble, and sometimes even in the studio, when Uncle Karl was absorbed in his work, she would fall into a reverie, and Uncle Karl looking up suddenly would see her sitting silent, doing nothing, staring straight ahead with musing eyes, apparently oblivious to everything around her.

This troubled him greatly, and he longed to help her someway.

Not far from the house was a piece of woods, the heart's delight of Barbara, who, as soon as the weather grew at all springlike, spent many hours there. Uncle Karl — who was as fond of it as Barbara — had made a rustic seat just big enough for two, between two fine old trees, hemmed in by so many others that it was almost as hidden from sight as though it were enclosed by walls.

To this delightful spot Barbara loved to take a favorite book and spend hours reading and enjoying the sweet freshness of the woods at the same time. Here too Uncle Karl liked to come when he was not too busy in the studio, and when he did so Barbara's happiness was perfect.

"Oh, Uncle Karl!" said she warmly, one day when they were enjoying their retreat together. "How I love this beautiful place!"

Uncle Karl looked at her sharply. "Girlie," he said suddenly, "I have often wondered why you are happier here in this little backwoods

place with no companion but your stupid old uncle than you are at home surrounded by friends of your own age, and the beloved only daughter of the house."

Barbara was silent, but on her bright face fell the shadow Uncle Karl had seen on it at home.

"Won't you tell me, girlie?" he said tenderly. "I'm a good deal older than you, and perhaps I could help you. You know you are the only daughter of my heart; dearie, tell me the truth."

Barbara hesitated, and sudden tears filled her eyes. It was hard for her to speak of her secret grief, but Uncle Karl was — well, he was Uncle Karl, and no more need be said.

"It was n't altogether that miserable school affair that made you sick, girlie," he went on gently; "there was something back of that, I'm sure. I saw it in your face; I see it now when I speak of your home. It's a serious trouble; let me help you."

Barbara suddenly burst into tears, with heavy sobs that made it impossible to speak,

while Uncle Karl gently stroked her hair and said soothingly: —

"There — there — girlie! don't cry so — you wring my heart."

Soon as she could speak, it all came out in one burst: "My mother does n't love me — nobody does — they all love Janet — they believe her and they don't believe me. Uncle Karl, I want to stay with you always!"

"Girlie — girlie," cried Uncle Karl in horror, "you 're all wrong! What has made you think so! Your mother loves you above everything on earth; I know it!"

"Oh, no," sobbed Barbara, "you don't know."

By close questioning Uncle Karl got the whole story; all the little things over which Barbara had brooded till they made the world black to her, and he understood, for he knew his gentle, peace-loving sister — Barbara's mother — well enough to see how, in her anxiety to make the widow and orphan happy, she had not thought how it would appear to her daughter.

Though not more than half convinced by Uncle Karl's warm defense of her mother, Barbara was somehow comforted.

That night, after she was in bed, Uncle Karl wrote a long letter to Barbara's mother, not a picture letter as usual, but a true account of what was in Barbara's heart, that had made her so unhappy, and had so grieved her mother when she was at home.

Barbara's mother was much shocked, but she could not realize Barbara's depth of feeling, and there before her was Janet's mother, with her sad face, always speaking of her fatherless child and looking sharply for slights to her; so that it was impossible for one of her peace-loving temperament to make a sudden change. But she thought of it constantly, and gradually plans were made to provide another home for the aunt and cousin whose presence had so unhappy an effect on her own daughter.

The arrangements were made, but could not be carried out until the fall, and there would be a few more months of Janet to endure, for Barbara must go home in the spring.

CHAPTER XIX

BARBARA HIRES OUT

In the spring, therefore, Barbara went home, quite well and strong, and happy to get back, for, although she loved Uncle Karl best of everybody in the world, she did love her parents and her young friends.

She had passed a very profitable winter, having improved a good deal in her drawing, and progressed wonderfully in her studies, under the careful instruction of her devoted uncle, who gave most of his evenings to this labor of love.

But she found that during her absence Janet had more and more absorbed the attentions of her mother, and she seemed now even to take Barbara's place in the house. It was intolerable to Barbara, and she felt that she could not endure it. Her journey and her long absence from home had given her a little more confidence in herself, and she began to

look cautiously about for some way of escape from the daily annoyance of Janet's presence.

At last she made up her mind to hire herself out as a child's nurse.

She considered many plans before she came to this decision. At first she planned to run away to another town and support herself by writing; but, having secretly made a few attempts and found that nobody wanted her work, — quite unlike the story books in which the young writer is generally welcomed with effusion and asked for more, — she had the sense to see that she might starve before she succeeded in earning her living.

Nothing that she could think of was feasible except the one plan of going out as a servant, and so wretched had she become in her home that at last she resolved to do it.

Learning that a new family at the farther end of the town was looking for a girl to take care of a child, she made up her mind to begin with them. So one morning, telling her mother she was going to see Ellen Harbeck — an intimate friend — she started out.

"I shall never see my home again," was the bitter thought that filled her heart as she closed the door behind her. "Nor that hateful Janet!" was the next thought, that turned her mood from sorrow to anger. "Now they can do everything for her; I shall never trouble them again," and with these wretched thoughts she hurried on.

She first went to her friend's house, for she was a truthful girl; but Ellen was not at home, so she did not stay a minute, but passed on.

When she reached the house of the strangers she went boldly up to the kitchen door and knocked.

A tired-looking woman with a two-year-old child hanging to her skirts came to the door.

"I heard," stammered Barbara, "that you want to hire a nurse-girl."

"Indeed I do!" said the lady eagerly; "do you know of any one I could get?"

"Would you take me?" asked Barbara.

"You?" said the lady, for she saw at once

that Barbara was not the sort who usually apply for situations.

"Yes," said Barbara shortly, turning as if to go; "but perhaps I would n't do!"

"Wait!" cried the lady. "I 'm sure you 'll do if you want the place; have you ever worked out?"

"No," said Barbara shortly, wishing with all her heart she had not come.

"But you 've taken care of children, perhaps," cried the lady, looking very sharply at her.

"No," said Barbara, again turning away.

"Well — don't be in such a hurry," said the lady, who saw that this was an unusual case, and wanted to understand it. "I 'll take you on trial," she said hastily. "Come right in."

Half inclined to take to her heels and run, Barbara slowly followed her into the house.

"You see," said the lady, "I have not been able to get help, and my baby here," turning to the fretting boy still clinging to her and looking at Barbara with half-frightened

eyes, "my baby is getting his teeth and wants a good deal of care. What I should want you to do would be to amuse him and keep him quiet and help me what you could when he is asleep. I think you can do it, and anyway I 'll try you for a week. You can go right up the back stairs and take off your things; you 'll find your room at the head of the stairs."

Slowly Barbara climbed the narrow, steep stairs to a little attic room over the kitchen. It was low and small, with one half-window, a cot, and a chair, a few hooks on the wall — and nothing else; not even a strip of carpet on the floor, nor a curtain to the window; neither washstand nor table of any kind. She stood amazed, for her mother had always furnished her maid's quarters as comfortably as any in the house.

A thought of her own dainty room gave her a sharp pang; its pretty blue carpet and curtains, its dressing-table, its shelf for books; but another thought followed instantly — "They 'll give it to Janet now" — which hardened her heart again, and she went down.

I cannot give the whole history of that day, for Barbara could never recall it all. It is enough to say that she coaxed the boy to go into the yard with her, and succeeded in keeping him tolerably still by the hardest work she had ever known, and when at last — worn out — he dropped asleep and she laid him on the bed, almost ready to drop herself, she found her new mistress ready with further tasks for her.

There was a sink full of dishes to be washed, the kitchen to be swept, and dinner to be got.

And when the lady had eaten her dinner alone and told Barbara to sit down at the mussed table, with its dirty dishes and cold food, and eat her dinner, she had to swallow very fast and brace herself with thoughts of Janet, before she could do it, and even then she could not eat.

The lady was watching her closely and noted all this, but said nothing, and when she left the table, told her to wash the dishes.

These tasks were most hateful to Barbara. She had not dreamed of anything but taking

care of a child; and all that long day they grew more and more distasteful to her, and whenever she thought of that dismal attic room her very soul revolted. At last towards night she felt that she could not stand it any longer, and got courage to say: —

"I don't think I shall suit you, Mrs. Smith, and I guess I 'll go."

But Mrs. Smith, though she did not really expect to keep her, wanted to find out who she was, and what was the reason of her running away from home, — for she readily understood that such was the case, — and would not let her go.

When it grew dark Mr. Smith came home, and he and his wife went into another room and talked in low tones, and Barbara knew they were talking about her; and while she walked the kitchen with the fretful child, trying to get him to sleep, she caught now and then a word which showed her that they meant to find out who she was, and, she thought probably, tell her family about her.

This belief was helped by the fact that Mr.

Smith looked at her so sharply, and asked her so many questions, and when she declared she would give up the place, he would not consent, but insisted upon her staying out the week for which she had hired. When she persisted, he even threatened that he could have her arrested for "breach of contract."

Barbara did not know what that was, but it sounded legal, and she began to be afraid of the man and terrified at the position in which she found herself.

As soon as the supper dishes were washed and she could get away, she went up to the little attic room and threw herself on the bed, very tired from her hard day's work, but wide awake to plan her escape; for she could not stand it another minute, with that man hunting up her family and covering her with shame.

Bitterly she regretted her wild adventure, and thought if she could once get safely home she would never — never — leave it again. But how to get home without that man finding out — that was the puzzle now.

She heard them going about downstairs, locking the doors, and at last all was quiet. Now perhaps she could steal down and get away; but it was a long way home, and she was afraid to go alone at night, and besides, her mother would think she had stayed all night with Ellen, as she sometimes did, and the house would be locked up, too.

So she determined to wait till morning — as soon as it was light and before they got up. She dared not go to sleep for fear she should not wake in time. Keeping awake was even harder than the day's work had been, but she got off the bed and sat on the hard kitchen chair to keep herself from sleeping.

Never was a night so long, though she did sleep a little even sitting up; never was daylight so slow in coming, and all through those long hours, except the few minutes that she dozed off, Barbara was thinking.

How foolish her own conduct seemed! How crazy the notion that she could carry out this scheme! Of course her parents would hunt her up, and she would be disgraced. How

silly—in that bitter hour—looked her resentment against Janet! In a word, what a fool she had been! If she could only get safely away!

CHAPTER XX

THE SECRET HIDING-PLACE

As soon as it was fairly light Barbara slipped off her shoes and stole down the stairs. As she feared, she found the kitchen door locked and the key gone—they had meant to keep her! But she had thought of that, and remembered that the windows were not very high from the ground, and she had particularly noticed that one was above a flower-bed into which she dared drop.

Raising the window inch by inch with greatest care to make no sound, Barbara at last got it high enough to get up on the sill and drop out. As she touched the ground she remembered her shoes left on the floor, but she could not get back, nor would such a small thing as shoes tempt her to go into that house again if she could.

She left the yard quietly, and then started on a wild run through the still silent streets,

fearing that she might be pursued, and looking back every minute to see if Mr. Smith were in sight.

After she had turned a corner she felt a little safer, and then she realized that this pace would arouse suspicion if any one met her, and being without shoes would be still more suspicious; so she forced herself to walk.

She was most disturbed by her stockings, which, of course, in those days, were white, and, in her short dress, very conspicuous. Then she stopped and pulled them off. "They 'll think I always go barefooted," she thought; but the whiteness of her feet struck her, and she was afraid that would be noticed. So the first muddy place on the street that she came to, she walked into it and soon reduced her feet to a condition that she was sure would stamp her as a regular barefoot.

She reached home breathless and very tired, just as Bridget was opening the door; and, hiding behind a lilac-bush till she had gone into the woodshed for wood to start the fire, Barbara — first wiping her feet on the grass — slipped

quietly into the kitchen, up the back stairs, and reached her own room without being seen.

Oh, what a relief she felt when — after a good bath to her feet — she flung herself on to her own little white bed and burst into tears — half happy and half still fearful, for she was sure that man would try to find her and arrest her as he had said.

At present, at any rate, she was safe, and hastily undressing she went to bed.

At breakfast-time her mother came to the door and opened it.

"Why, Barbara," she said, "I thought you stayed with Ellen all night; I did n't see you come in."

"I was tired," said Barbara drowsily, "and I came right up to bed," — thankful that she did not have to explain.

"Well; if you 're still sleepy," said her mother, who noticed her tone, "you may lie awhile; I 'll save your breakfast for you."

"Thank you," said Barbara sleepily, turning over for a fresh nap.

It was late when at last she got up and

went downstairs, but she had made her plan to avoid that man.

The house Barbara lived in was an old-fashioned one. Over the front door was a little porch, and above it a roof. Now this roof was at the end of the upstairs hall which ran through the house, and long ago, when Barbara was small, she had discovered that behind a lounge which always stood across that end, there was an opening into this porch roof. The lounge was probably kept there for the purpose of hiding the opening, which was, to be sure, not very ornamental.

Without saying anything to any one, Barbara in her silent ways had often slipped into this place which no one seemed to know about. It was not very light or she would have loved to have it for a hiding-place in which to read and not be discovered; such a retreat as she found in the haymow. But now it occurred to her as a place where she could hide if that man came to the house to find her.

So she went quietly to work to make it habitable.

Taking the time when she knew her mother and her aunt were busy in the back part of the house, and Janet had gone to walk, Barbara brushed out the little place, full of dust and spider webs, as well as she could, and carried a strip of old carpet from the attic to lie on — for it was too low to sit up in a chair.

She then went to her father's tool box and got a gimlet, with which she bored a hole through the floor of her den so that she could look into the porch below and see any one who came to the door.

Her plan was, whenever she heard the door-bell ring, to hide in there, and see if the guest was the man she feared, for she thought he would go all over the town and try to find her. She planned to bring up there some food, so that if he came and insisted on waiting to see her, she could stay in there all day if she had to.

All this she carried out; she furnished her hiding-place with fruit and cakes, whenever she could take them without being no-

ticed, and often and often, for the first week or two, at the sound of the doorbell she scrambled into her den, and watched and waited for the enemy.

If that place had only been lighter it would have been the joy of her life, for the possession of such a secret retreat that absolutely no one knew — or remembered if they did know — was just the thing her heart loved. It was several weeks before Barbara could hear the doorbell without a terror that sent her at once to her hiding-place.

Janet — who was always peering around, looking for something to tell about — nearly discovered the precious secret. She had noticed that Barbara often disappeared and could not be found, and one day she saw the hall lounge a little drawn away from the wall, and drawing it still farther she saw the opening through which Barbara slipped ; she went at once to her aunt.

" Auntie," she said eagerly, " what is that great hole behind the lounge in the hall upstairs ? "

"Oh, that's only into the roof of the porch," said her aunt, looking up from her sewing.

"May I go in there and see what it's like?" asked Janet.

Barbara, who was reading by the window, started in dismay, but her mother's words calmed her.

"Oh, I would n't go in there!" she said. "It's full of dust and cobwebs — probably spiders. It's too low to be cleaned out, and you'd get very dirty. Besides, there's nothing to be seen there, anyway."

That settled Janet; to get dirty was the one thing she hated above all others. So Barbara breathed freely, and her den was never discovered.

CHAPTER XXI

A LETTER FROM UNCLE KARL

"BARBARA," said her mother one day as she came in from school, "here 's a letter for you from Uncle Karl."

"Oh, good!" cried Barbara, springing joyfully to take it.

It was rather large for a letter, and her mother smiled as she gave it to her. "I guess it 's one of his kind of letters written with the brush and not the pen," she said.

Hastily Barbara took off the cover, and sure enough — it was a card somewhat larger than an ordinary letter covered with the sketch of a lively scene.

"It 's the kitchen," cried Barbara, recognizing it at once; "there 's the stove, and over here" — pointing — "is the door that leads upstairs, and that is Mary there, in the same old blue dress; but what is the matter? There 's a puddle of something on the floor — and —

and — a broken dish — and — she seems to be wringing her hands — and — "

"I think," interrupted her mother, "that she has dropped a dish and spilled something, and is in distress about it."

"Oh, yes!" said Barbara, "all over her floor that was always white as snow! and that 's Aunt Betty — with the same checked apron, and how horrified she does look!" and Barbara's merry laugh rang out as she imagined the scene.

"And there 's Uncle Karl just come in to the door," went on Barbara eagerly, "holding his handkerchief to his eyes as if crying — the dear old humbug! — and see, mother — one eye peeking out over the top! Oh, is n't he funny!" and she laughed long and loud; the picture was so real, she could see the whole thing.

"And see!" she cried suddenly, pointing to the figure of a small dog escaping through an open door evidently in a desperate fright, tail curled down, running for dear life.

"He 's the guilty one! he tripped Mary —

or startled her so that she let the dish fall; I wonder what was in it! Oh, see! the kettle is lifted off the stove onto the hearth, and the stuff on the floor is steaming — why, that's Aunt Betty's preserving kettle — it 's the biggest one in the house — I believe that's a lot of preserves she has just made!"

"And see there on the table," said her mother, "all those jars, ready, no doubt, to hold it."

"Oh, yes," said Barbara, "and see this border around the whole — it 's branches — and — and —" she hesitated — "and pears, I do believe! yes — yes — Mary was putting up pears — they have a beautiful pear-tree in the garden — and that little dog ran in and startled her — and she let the dish fall; it 's plain as day! Is n't he wonderful, mother? and so dear!" she added warmly.

"He certainly is," said her mother, "my dearest brother." As he was her only brother, this made Barbara laugh again.

"Why, there 's something on the other side!" she exclaimed, turning over the card.

Sure enough, there was another scene; the same kitchen with Mary on her knees scrubbing away for dear life, and Aunt Betty standing before the stove with dress pinned up so as not to touch the floor, stirring something in the big kettle, which sent steam nearly to the ceiling.

"Mary's cleaning up, and Aunt Betty's making a new lot," said Barbara, laughing again.

"You must answer this letter," said her mother.

"Yes, indeed! I'll write this very evening," said Barbara warmly. "Dear Uncle Karl! I wish he lived here!" with a little sigh.

"Mother," she said, as a sudden thought struck her, "I'll get a mammoth sheet and write it all full."

"Well," said her mother, "that'll be nice; he deserves it for such a letter as his."

So a big sheet of paper was bought, and the next day letter-writing began.

In those far-off days letters were not so common as they are now. Postage was very high,

twenty-five cents for each letter, no matter what its size or weight. This postage was paid by the one receiving the letter, so the writer was careful to make it worth the money it cost. It was customary in writing to a friend to take what was called a "mammoth sheet" — almost as big as one page of our common daily papers, and fill it at leisure, when it was full folding and sealing it up — envelopes were not yet — fastening it with sealing wax, or a wafer if you were not very particular.

Barbara had a pretty seal which had come to her in the famous birthday box in Minnesota. When it was pressed into the hot sealing wax that held the letter, it showed a candle in a candlestick, with the extinguisher on, and under it the words "Good-night."

Filling a mammoth sheet might look like a great undertaking to some of you, in these days of much hasty writing, but to Barbara it was a delight. She dearly loved to write letters, and she had to be restrained from sending many of the effusions she penned, because of the uncertainty that her letters

would be thought worth the quarter they would cost the receiver, for not only were letters more scarce, but quarters were not so plentiful and so common as now.

Thus it came to pass that Barbara wrote many letters that were never sent, and all the time she was in Minnesota she had kept the family well informed of all their doings.

CHAPTER XXII

"IMPROVING HER MIND"

One desire — one wish was so much a part of Barbara's very life that she could not remember when she had not cherished it as her dearest hope, the thing for which she was born. That was for writing — for the life of an author — for exerting what influence there might be in her through her pen.

As I have said several times, she was painfully diffident; she could never talk; the presence of listeners always made her dumb; only with pen in hand in her solitary room could she express what was in her.

To fit herself for this work that she felt was hers she began early to recognize that she ought to know more than she did; that it was not good for her to indulge in reading or "making up" stories, in which she delighted; but that she ought to devote herself to "solid reading." In a word, it was high time, in the

language of the day, to set about "improving her mind."

To this task she set herself soon after her return from the west. How to do it she learned from the wise men of those days through their books. These were the rules:

"First. Do some solid reading every day.

"Second. Never leave a sentence until you understand it.

"Third. At the bottom of each page, stop and give a synopsis of the contents of the page."

Under these directions she marked out a plan for herself, and one morning she began —full of enthusiasm — to carry it out.

She must have absolute quiet in order to fix her mind on the book; no one in the house must know, so as to laugh at her or to watch her. So she rose at five o'clock, and, hastily throwing on her clothes, she betook herself to the "spare room," — a room reserved for guests, where she was sure no one would come, at least at that early hour, and in the cold and gloomy morning opened the

book she had chosen from the bookcase downstairs.

It was one of the largest and least interesting-looking; and was, she was sure, "solid" enough on which to begin her labors. It was called "Finney's Theology."

I will not dwell on her struggles over this book — on the many weary mornings she plodded through sentences which were absolute Greek to her, but which — faithful to the rule of reading a sentence over till she understood it — she read and re-read till her brain was in a muddle, and she did not understand at last any better than at first.

After some weeks of this fruitless work she was forced to conclude that the task was too great for her, without a teacher to explain. Either she was stupid, or the book was too "solid" to begin on. She replaced "Finney's Theology" in the bookcase, and returned to her dearest delight, making up stories.

It was very soon after this faithful attempt and its dismal failure, and she had reached the age of fifteen, when she discovered, quite by

accident — for of course she never thought of asking any one for advice or help for herself — she discovered, as I said, by accident, that a book could be interesting though not a story.

It was an epoch in her life; it opened a new and delightful world to her.

Let me tell you just a few of the things that troubled Barbara at this point in her troubled young life. It may look silly to older folk who have forgotten the days of their youth, but many young hearts will understand.

Barbara's supreme desire was to look and act and be just like other people, so as not to be looked at or noticed in any way; but she was never able to accomplish it. Other girls' hair, for instance, would stay flat down where it was put, and very flat down was the style at that time, while Barbara's had a wave as unconquerable as a wave of the sea; her dress was always too long or too short, and it never set like other girls' dresses, — it would stick out where it should lie flat, and lie flat where it should stick out. Then, nature had

blessed her with feet and hands bigger than those described in the story books, and these unlucky members she was always trying to hide. She never would buy her own shoes or gloves, because she was ashamed to have even a shopman know the appalling size she wore!

Then again her eyes were not the large, liquid blue of the story maidens, which she longed to possess, but moderate-sized dark brown ones; and worse still, in her healthy outdoor life she had shot up quite tall; at fourteen she had reached her full height, and so foolishly ashamed was she of this that when standing up during the hymns in church, she would bend her knees a little and stand in that painful, crouching position, so as not to tower above her shorter neighbors.

More real, though perhaps no harder to bear at this age, were the troubles she found in the books she read — I might better say devoured. There were always allusions to things of which she was ignorant, yet that evidently every one was supposed to know, — books it was taken for granted every one had read,

names quoted that were plainly familiar as household words — but all unknown to her. Worst of all, she did not know where to look or how to find out these things. She could not even bear to ask Uncle Karl, dearly as she loved him, and encyclopedias and other books of reference this hungry, self-torturing soul had never heard of.

The book that opened a new world to her was — strangely enough — Macaulay's Essays. How much she learned from it! how many allusions over which she had puzzled in her reading were explained in this precious volume! She devoured it from cover to cover, and best of all she learned how to find out things. It sent her to encyclopedias and special dictionaries, and though there were none in the bookcase at home, there were a few in a library to which she had access.

CHAPTER XXIII

BOARDING SCHOOL

A FEW weeks after the world was changed to Barbara by the reading of a book there came another epoch in her life.

Janet, now eighteen years old, was married, and went away to live, taking her mother with her.

This alone made Barbara very happy, but it was not the end of changes.

"Barbara," said her mother to her, the evening after the wedding and the departure, "your father is obliged to go away on a long trip of some months, and I have decided to go with him."

"And take me?" cried Barbara in a spasm of joy.

"No; we don't think that best this time; but you may choose where you will go. You may go to stay with either of your aunts, or — you may go to boarding school."

To go to Aunt Fanny, who lived on a farm, was not very alluring, and she did not care to go again to Aunt Betty so soon, but to go to boarding school was one of her burning desires, and the idea of that quite compensated her for her brief disappointment about the journey; she cried eagerly,—

"Of course I'll go to boarding school! I've always wanted to! Where shall I go?"

"We must look about and see where it will be best," said her mother. "I have n't made any inquiries yet."

They did look about, they sent for circulars, they consulted friends, and Barbara did not let the subject rest till they had decided upon a school, a famous one in a pretty New England village.

Barbara was now the envied of all her schoolmates, with one and all of whom "going to boarding school" was the height of felicity.

Getting ready was almost as delightful as any part of the new experience. Barbara's mother was an unworldly woman, who did not

give much thought to dress, her favorite motto being that if a garment was whole and clean it was suitable for any occasion. It is needless to say that Barbara, like most of the world, did not agree with her in this opinion, and unfortunately it shook her confidence in her mother's judgment of what was proper for her.

Barbara herself was so decided in her tastes, so full of notions about her clothes, and at the same time so ignorant of the fashions, that the village dressmaker was nearly worn out — mind and body — before the last stitch was taken.

Then came the delight of packing, second only to the excitement of the journey, followed by the half-day's ride in the stage, and the introduction just at evening to the beautiful grounds and the stately buildings of the "Young Ladies' Seminary" which had been chosen.

Arrangements had been made by letter, so that Barbara was expected, and a room was ready for her, but when she was shown to the

room she was surprised to find it already occupied, and to be told by the dignified matron of the establishment that she was to share the room with the young lady already there, Miss Kate Reed, to whom she was at once introduced.

"You will have two drawers in the bureau, and half the clothes-press," said that lady calmly, "and when you have unpacked your trunk it will be placed in the trunk room at the end of the hall, where you can have access to it when you wish. Miss Reed will tell you the hours for meals, and show you where to go, and I hope you two will be very happy together," and with this she turned away, leaving the two girls to get acquainted at their leisure.

Barbara, who had been used all her life to a room alone, was so taken aback by having a roommate thrust upon her that for a moment she had a wild desire to turn and run out of the house and back home. But she knew, of course, that could not be, and she sank into a chair, uncertain what to do or say.

Meanwhile the girl, her new roommate, was looking at her sharply, "taking her in," as Barbara felt, from head to foot, and she felt from that first moment a deep dislike to her. At last Miss Reed spoke.

"You better take off your things," she said, "the supper bell 'll ring in a minute."

"I—I—never had any one in the room with me," stammered Barbara. "Can't anybody have a room alone?"

"No," said Kate crossly, for she resented Barbara's unwillingness to room with her. "Not unless she 's a nabob," she went on scornfully. "If you're too grand to room with anybody you better apply to Madam, and perhaps she 'll give you a suite to yourself on the drawing-room floor—with a maid to wait on you," and with this crushing sarcasm she flounced out of the room to tell the other girls about her new roommate.

Barbara's heart sank, and her grand ideas of "boarding school" had a severe shock; but she tried to console herself with the thought that it would n't be for long, and anyway she

must endure it. So she took off her things and prepared for the call to supper.

Unfortunately this school that had been chosen was a fashionable one, and Barbara's quick eye saw at once that her wardrobe was not up to the standard of the city girls, her schoolmates. She was as quick to see it as they were, and almost before they had, in schoolgirl fashion, set her down as "countryfied," she had as positively dubbed them "stuck-up," and in her usual way taken refuge in a reserve which looked like haughtiness, but was really extreme shyness.

This unhappy state of things might have changed on better acquaintance, but it was, on the contrary, strengthened by the fact that Barbara had little opportunity for making acquaintances, for, being left to choose her own studies, she had chosen what she liked,— music, French, and German. With these studies only, she was classed as a "special student," and did not sit in the schoolroom with the other girls, but studied in her room and went to the recitation room only to recite.

Thus her acquaintance was limited to the girls who boarded in the house, and her natural diffidence, added to all the rest, resulted in making her almost a hermit in her room.

She really knew but one girl well, and that one was her roommate, who, unfortunately for Barbara, was a great gossip, fond of telling big stories, and careless of the truth of them.

Very soon Barbara found herself really avoided by the girls, and, attributing it to her plain dress, she shut herself up in a shell of cold reserve. This gave her unscrupulous roommate, who really had a genius for falsehood, chance to make up as many stories about her as she fancied. She did not fail to take advantage of the opportunity, and entertained the girls day after day with all sorts of imaginary tales about Barbara, her home, her parents, their queer ways, and their position in society, of which she was, of course, entirely ignorant.

Barbara's shy keeping to herself made the stories seem probable, and before long she

noticed that all the girls looked askance at her, and she was as much alone as if she were in a foreign country where no one spoke her language, and naturally very unhappy.

Now Barbara, being a "special student," had privileges that the regular scholars had not. One of these was liberty to go out of the house whenever she liked, while the others could go only on specified days. Her roommate took advantage of this to give Barbara plenty of errands to do for her; such as to buy candy or cakes or something of that kind, and smuggle it into the house under her cape, so that the maid who opened the door should not see them and report — for this was against the rules, though Barbara did not know it. Barbara did not like these errands very much, they seemed sneaky, and she hated anything of that kind, but she disliked to refuse her roommate, for she could be very disagreeable when she chose.

One week there seemed no end to the purchases she had to make for her. Every time she went out it was something, — cakes, candy,

tarts, and finally a pie. This last got her into serious trouble, for it greased through the paper it was wrapped in, and as Barbara held it up under her cape it greased her dress waist so that she could n't wear it again. It was her best one, too, a light blue merino, and after that she had to wear one of her school dresses when she went out, which annoyed her very much.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE SECRET OUT

BARBARA soon found out what all these mysterious purchases were for. The very next day after the ruin of her dress was a special anniversary in the school, which was always a holiday and celebrated by an unusually fine dinner in the Principal's private dining-room, to which none but scholars in good standing were invited. Each one considered worthy, received, several days before the important day, an engraved invitation in the highest style of the art, and on the festive occasion she put on her best gown and her finest company manners, and was entertained as though she were an honored guest, instead of a boarding pupil.

By poor scholarship Kate Reed had forfeited the right to partake of this festival, and now appeared the reason for the supplies Barbara had brought in for her.

The school grounds were very large, and in them was a small body of water called a lake. This was a favorite place for boating, and there were two small rowboats belonging to the school which the girls were allowed to use. In the middle of this lake was a tiny island, the favorite resort of picnic parties, when the girls had permission to have them, on holidays.

Early in the morning of the festive day Kate had stolen out of the house with her numerous packages, accompanied by two other girls who were likewise debarred from the day's pleasures. They rowed over to the island, taking both boats so that no one could follow them. There, in plain sight from the shore, they had spread their feast, a clean towel for a tablecloth and the grass for seats.

The island was so near that everything could be seen, and though the dinner was not so fine as that to which the fortunate ones were bidden, it consisted of things that schoolgirls specially like — cake, pie, candy, nuts, and raisins; not an inch of bread or any solid thing. Hardly one of the girls who crowded

the banks, looking across the water at the culprits and calling them to send one of the boats back so they could come over — hardly one, I say, but would have preferred the forbidden goodies, rapidly disappearing before their eyes, to the rather formal and perfectly proper dinner in the house.

Meanwhile Kate was triumphant. While she had not absolutely broken the rules, she had succeeded in having a good time in spite of what was intended as a punishment; and that all the girls envied her her feast she well knew.

When the day was over, the viands all eaten, and Kate and her party returned to the house, she was called into the room of the Principal and reproved. In reply to the question who supplied her with the forbidden dainties, she was mean enough to answer that Barbara did, without explaining the circumstances, so that Barbara was supposed to be an accomplice, and in her turn was reproved and not allowed to go out as freely as before.

All this trouble with her roommate came at last to an end, in this way: Next to Barbara

at the long dining-table sat a girl with whom she had sometimes exchanged a few words, and one day this neighbor — Fanny Burt from Minnesota — being in a rage against some of the girls who had asked her what she considered insulting questions about her home, could not help pouring out her grievances even in the ear of her silent neighbor.

"Because I live in Minnesota," she said indignantly, "they think we are half civilized out there. They asked me if I was n't afraid of Indians! Indians!" she added with scorn. "There are n't any more Indians there than here!"

"I once knew a girl who lived in Minneapolis," said Barbara, after she had expressed her sympathy.

"Who was it?" asked Fanny, interested.

"It was Lily Wilson," said Barbara. "She spent a winter in our town, with her aunt."

"Why, she 's my own cousin!" cried Fanny, "and my dearest friend; and — come to think — I believe I 've heard her speak of you! Is your name Barbara Brainard?"

"Yes," said Barbara.

Fanny was thoughtful a moment; then, being a very outspoken girl, she went on: —

"Lily was very fond of you, and I don't believe a word Kate Reed says about you and your folks."

"What does she say?" asked Barbara, startled. "She does n't know anything about them."

"Why, she tells awful stories," said Fanny, "and that's why —" she hesitated.

"Is that why the girls don't care to know me?" asked Barbara, a light breaking in upon her.

"Yes," said Fanny. "Come into my room after study hours and I'll tell you. I believe that girl's been lying; she's an awful liar anyway — and it's a shame!" she finished hotly.

Well, Barbara went, and heard stories of herself and her home life which had been made up by her roommate, — all utterly false, of course. These stories, and not her plain dress it was, which had prejudiced every one against her.

For once, in her indignation Barbara forgot her shyness and talked freely, convincing the girls assembled there that they had been grossly deceived.

Barbara, feeling outraged, by the advice of the girls complained to the heads of the school. This made a stir in the household; Kate Reed was called to the room of the Principal, and closely questioned as to her authority for the statements she had made.

She denied some of the charges, tried to justify others, and at last got confused, and contradicted herself, and convinced her judges that she had been guilty of falsehood and slander.

She was severely reproved, and removed to another room with an under teacher, who would keep her in order, it was hoped.

After that affair Barbara got on better and made some warm friends among her schoolmates; but after all she was not of them, and she grew more and more anxious for the time when she could go home.

CHAPTER XXV

THE END OF SCHOOL DAYS

It was not long after Kate Reed had been removed to another room that she finished her career in that school, and was sent home in disgrace.

It happened in this way. One Sunday evening a group of the girls on the third floor, where Barbara lived, were gathered in one of the larger rooms, sitting in the twilight telling stories. Sunday evening there was no study hour, and they often passed it in this way.

After awhile, as it grew darker, the stories gradually took on a sombre tone, and finally they became mostly ghost stories.

When they had worked themselves into a rather excitable state, Kate Reed, still smarting from her disgrace, thought she would give them a scare. She slipped quietly out of the room, wrapped herself in a sheet from her bed, and came back.

The room was faintly lighted from a street lamp outside, and when there suddenly appeared in the open door the tall white figure, it could be indistinctly seen.

One of the girls, naturally delicate, and somewhat superstitious besides, had by over-study and too great ambition brought herself into such a state of nervousness that not much was needed to upset her. The excitement of the hour and the stories had worked upon her so that when she looked up and saw in the dim light this figure, she uttered a piercing shriek and fell on the floor in violent convulsions.

There was instant consternation in the house, and during the confusion the guilty figure vanished.

Teachers came at once, the room was lighted, girls sent to their own rooms, and a doctor called. It was hours before the victim was restored to consciousness, and in fact — as was learned afterwards — she never fully recovered.

As soon as she was able, her friends took her home, but the news was gradually whis-

pered about among the girls that she would never be the bright scholar she had been.

To discover the culprit was the teachers' first care. The girls were all questioned, but no one knew, and it was not until a search of all the rooms on the floor brought to light a hastily scrambled-together bed in Kate Reed's room, and, on closer examination, a sheet mussed and having a corner still pinned up to form a cap, that the truth became known. The search had been so sudden that she had not had time to make the bed properly.

Added to these evidences, her conduct when accused proved her guilty. She was removed to a little room opening from one of the teachers' rooms and kept there in confinement till her parents could be informed and come to take her away. None of the girls saw her again.

While all these things had been happening the weeks had grown into months, and it was spring, and near to the end of the school year.

Barbara's parents had returned from their long trip, and one day she received a letter containing great news. Her father had de-

cided to go to the far West to live, and her mother was already packing up for the move.

To go to new places and see new things was next best to traveling all over the world — which was one of Barbara's great desires. This plan, therefore, filled her with delight. In fact, she was so elated by the news that she could hardly keep her mind on her studies at all. French verbs grew more and more intricate; German genders took on new mysteries, and when she tried to practice she could play only the most joyous airs, — in fact, she wanted to shout with joy.

Staying stupidly at school while this jolly thing was happening became, to her mind, an impossibility. She wrote an urgent letter to her mother, begging to be allowed to come home at once, to help get ready, and to take the long journey with them. The school year, she urged, was nearly over, and the rest of the time was mostly taken up by reviews and examinations, which, as she was not to come back next year, were really not important to her.

This plan was approved at home, for her father had arranged to take the trip in a way very different from that in which Barbara and Uncle Karl had made it the year before.

Thus it happened that within a week after the tragic affair just related, Barbara bade farewell to school, and went home to make ready for her long journey.

When the stage drove up to the house to let Barbara alight, a young man ran out of the door to assist her. For an instant Barbara did not recognize him, then she cried joyously:

"Why! Brother Ned! you here?"

For it was indeed her only brother, several years older than herself, who had been for many years — all the time Barbara had been living this story — away from home, at school and college, and the last two or three years pursuing his studies abroad, so that he was really almost a stranger to Barbara.

Now he had finished his studies and come home before deciding upon his profession, and he was to be of the family party on the journey which, as I said, was to be very differ-

ent from, and far more delightful than the one Barbara had already taken.

Her father had bought a fine pair of horses and a large, comfortable carriage with a place at the back for baggage. With this outfit he proposed to drive leisurely through the country.

CHAPTER XXVI

ADVENTURES ON THE WAY

It was a fine morning in May when, the last bit of furniture being packed and nailed up in its box, the last good-by said to friends, the last baggage piled up on the back of the carriage, the family took their seats and drove away from their empty home.

Packing had been tiresome work, for everything had to be boxed for the long journey by canal boat, by lake steamer, and lastly by teams.

To make the carriage load as light as possible the things they took with them to use on the way were packed in traveling bags, queer, old-fashioned things they were, such as you young folks never saw unless you happened to come across one in some grandmother's attic. They were made of very heavy, gay-colored striped stuff, long and narrow in shape, like the mail bags used in Uncle Sam's post of-

fices, and fastened at the top by a strap woven in and out through holes made for it in the heavy leather top of the bag and locked by a small padlock.

One of these bags would hold as much as a small trunk, and mussy enough everything looked when it came out of one! Two of these great sacks held the baggage of the four travelers, and were strapped on to the carriage, as I said.

Barbara was in the highest spirits when they started, and told Ned with great glee about the famous luncheons presented to Uncle Karl and herself when they started for the West. They took no luncheon this time, for they intended to stop at hotels and farmhouses for their meals and to sleep.

The first few days were delightful, the weather fine, the roads good, towns and villages convenient to stop at. The horses were fresh, and trotted off gayly, and Barbara thought she never heard of such a charming way of traveling.

But this delightful state of things could

not last always. As they drew near the western part of the state towns were less frequent, and roads not so good. Then the weather changed, and one day there came on a steady rain. There was no comfortable place where they could stay till the storm was over, so they had to drive on, all the time hoping to come to a country inn or a good-looking farmhouse. It seemed almost as if they had got into an unsettled country, for nearly all day passed without the sight of a house. The rain was in their faces, so that in spite of the side curtains they were very wet.

They made as merry as they could, Barbara declaring that she loved to ride in the rain, till brother Ned on the front seat, chancing to look around at her, burst into a laugh.

"What is so very funny?" asked Barbara.

"Oh! if I only had a looking-glass!" cried Ned between shouts of laughter. "Mother, look at her! Is n't she a sight!"

Mrs. Brainard turned and looked at Barbara. She could not help a smile, for Barbara's bonnet, which was of some openwork fabric which

had been stiffened into shape, had wilted under the soaking, and the ribbon with which it was trimmed had dripped bright green streams over her forehead.

"She looks like an Indian in his war paint!" cried Ned. But it ceased to be funny when Barbara snatched off the wreck of a bonnet, covered her face, and began to cry. She could n't bear to be laughed at, and the ruin of her bonnet, and the thought of how she should look to stop anywhere were too much for her.

"There — there," said her father soothingly, though there was a quiver on his lips as he glanced back at her, for she was indeed, as Ned had declared, a sight, "don't take it so hard, daughter. We 'll make it all right at the first town we come to."

"Yes," said her mother. "You shall have a new bonnet, dear."

"I can't go to a store to pick one out!" sobbed Barbara.

"Never mind, sis," said Ned, ashamed of his rudeness. "I 'll pick it out myself, and it shall be the prettiest in the shop, too."

Tears did not improve Barbara's looks, but her mother with a wet cloth sponged the streaks from her face, and taking off the dripping ribbon doubled back the front of the limp bonnet — which was really a bonnet and not a hat such as young folk wear nowadays — so that it looked like a close-fitting hood, and was not so dreadful.

It was nearly dark when they came in sight of a log house which had also a barn. A barn was as important as a house to the travelers, for the faithful Bill and Bob must be made comfortable as well as the people.

They drove up to the house, and, handing the reins to Ned, Mr. Brainard got out and went towards the door, Barbara following. A man came out.

"Can you give us supper and keep us all night?" asked Mr. Brainard.

The man looked blank. "Kein Inglis," he said.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Brainard, "what shall we do now!" then, turning to Barbara, "Can't you 'parley vous' him — or whatever

is the German for it? You know German, don't you?"

"Y-e-s," said Barbara doubtfully.

"Well; ask him if he can keep us," said her father. Barbara cudgeled her brains.

"Ich kann kleine deutsch —" she began, when a light came into the man's dull face, and he poured out such a torrent of German that Barbara could n't understand a word.

"Wait! wait!" she cried, "nichts verstay;" then more slowly, "Wollen zie geben — (dear me! what *is* supper!)" She began again: "Wir wollen — eat — *manger*," she said desperately, "und schlafen — (Oh, dear, why can't I think!) alle nicht," she finished in despair, hoping he would guess her meaning. But he did not; his face was a stupid blank, evidently he had not a spark of imagination to aid him.

At this moment Ned came up, and it suddenly flashed upon Barbara that he had lived two years in Berlin. She turned, seized his arm, and gave him a violent shake, crying out, "You bad boy! Why did you let me make a fool of myself?"

"I wanted to see," said Ned with laughing eyes, "how boarding school German would go."

"Well, I think it was real mean," said Barbara, now thoroughly vexed, and turning away from the door. Then Ned addressed the man in his own language. He brightened up at once, and they soon came to an understanding. They could have supper and beds, "two beds," the man said proudly. The horses could be made comfortable in the barn, and the carriage could go under the shed.

Barbara and her mother hurried into the house, glad to see a big fire on the hearth and to be met by a hospitable-looking frau, who, though she could not talk to them, made them comfortable in her own way. Meanwhile Ned and his father with their host went to see to the comfort of Bill and Bob. Soon they came in, bearing the great traveling bags, which, having been well covered, had not been wet by the rain.

The room was kitchen, bedroom, and living-room all in one, being, in fact, the whole of the lower part of the house. Mrs. Brainard had

looked around anxiously on the two beds in the far corner, till she noticed steep stairs, hardly more than a ladder, which evidently led to rooms above.

"Oh, mother, is n't this a queer place!" whispered Barbara. "I wonder if we've got to sleep here!"

"No, dear," said her mother. "Don't you see the stairs? There must be something up there."

Soon they were warm and dry, and interested in the preparations for supper which were going on, while Ned was obliged to answer a thousand questions about their journey.

When at last they were bidden to eat, they found on the table fried salt pork swimming in gravy, potatoes roasted before the fire, sauerkraut, cold boiled beans, zwieback, and pickles, with thick, black-looking coffee.

Barbara looked over the viands with dismay; not a thing she could eat, she thought, except the potatoes, which she did n't like anyway.

But Ned, after his Berlin training, attacked

the sauerkraut and zwieback cheerfully, and her father and mother, after draining off the grease, managed to eat pork and beans and potatoes, while Barbara began munching the crisp zwieback, and found it so good that she made her supper of it.

Ned tried to coax her to try the sauerkraut, which he declared was really good when you got used to it, but the odor of it was so unpleasant to her that she could n't bring herself to taste it.

While they had been eating, the woman of the house had been busy up the stairs, and when they had finished, she offered to show them their beds.

Tired and sleepy, they all climbed the ladder-like stairs, and found themselves in an attic, all one room, with two beds, and dimly lighted by one tallow candle.

Looks of dismay passed between the elders, while Ned cried, "By George!" and Barbara burst out, "We *can't* sleep here, mother!"

Then her mother bethought herself that she had noticed in the lower room a large,

old-fashioned clothes-horse, and she instantly thought she could divide the dreary attic into two rooms with it. She hushed Barbara and despatched Ned to ask for it. In a few moments he appeared, carrying it with the help of their host, whose face was filled with wonder what they wanted it for.

The clothes-horse was about six feet high, with three divisions or leaves. Spread out before one of the beds, and hung with surplus blankets from the same beds, it made a very good screen. Mrs. Brainard said, "I'll take Barbara, and you two boys may have the other bed;" to which the "boys" laughingly consented.

The beds themselves were curiosities; great feather-beds with thinner feather-beds for coverlids, and quilts and blankets enough to smother a whole family. The first thing Mrs. Brainard did was to drag off the feather covers from both beds.

Barbara thought of Mrs. Blake's feather-beds, and told her mother about them while she was rummaging in one of the traveling bags.

Soon she brought to light a tin box, from which she took a candle, a small candlestick of brass that came apart with a screw so as to be easily packed, and a box of matches.

The candle she lighted and set on the floor; there was not a table or chair in the whole attic; they were obliged to hang their clothes on the bedposts, which were four or five feet high.

"I wonder where we 'll wash in the morning," said Barbara.

"Down at the pump, I presume," answered her mother.

"Well; it's a good thing we each have our own soap and towels and things," said Barbara.

"Of course; I never travel without them," said her mother.

"What else have you got in that box, mother?" asked Barbara. "I never saw it before."

"Oh, you 'll see as we go on; perhaps it'll turn out to be like the famous bag of the mother in the 'Swiss Family Robinson.' Do you remember that, Barbara?"

"Yes, indeed!" said Barbara, much interested, for she was very fond of that story. "Let me take the box, mother!"

"No, indeed; there would n't be any mystery about it if you pulled it over now. You wait and see if I don't take out of it every extra thing we need on the way." And now, blowing out the light, she lay down and tried to sleep.

"What shall we do if it rains to-morrow?" Barbara whispered a few minutes later. "We can't stay here!"

"Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," said Mrs. Brainard, quoting a favorite text. "And now do go to sleep, Barbara."

CHAPTER XXVII

THE MAGIC BOX

THE first thing the next morning, Barbara took a look at the weather from the little window in the attic.

"Mother!" she exclaimed, in despairing tone, "it's raining still!"

"Well," said her mother, "then we'll have to content ourselves here awhile longer."

"Oh, dear!" cried Barbara.

That, too, was the decision of her father when he came in from the barn, where he and Ned had been caring for the horses.

Breakfast was a repetition of supper, with the addition of hot corn bread. Finding that their hosts were willing to keep them till the storm was over, they settled themselves in the big kitchen. Ned found an old German newspaper from which he tried to extract amusement, but it didn't prove to be very funny, and he soon threw it aside. Barbara fidgeted

and went from one window to another, hoping somewhere to see a break in the clouds, and her father was almost as uneasy as she.

Mrs. Brainard meanwhile had taken from her pocket a small package, which, as she opened, showed a silk purse she was crocheting, and, seating herself by a window, she went busily to work on it.

"I think," she said a little later, observing the restlessness of her family, "I really think boys should be taught some light handicraft —knitting, for instance; if now you two restless 'boys' could occupy your hands in some useful way, how much happier you would be!"

A general laugh followed this suggestion, which was not considered serious.

"But I am serious," she said; "I really think so."

"Can't somebody tell a story?" Barbara broke in; "I love stories on rainy days!"

"And all other days, too, I guess," said her mother.

"Well, yes; I do," said Barbara.

At this moment a thought seemed to strike

Mrs. Brainard. "Ned," she said, "will you bring me that traveling bag in the corner?" pointing to the one she had packed upstairs, ready for the start.

Ned brought it, saying, "What's the little mother going to do? — find some knitting for 'us boys'?"

"You'll see," said his mother, with a knowing smile. "I'm going to see if I can't find some cure for all this discontent, in my S. F. R. box."

"What box is that?" asked Ned. "What do those mysterious letters mean?"

Mrs. Brainard was busily rummaging in the bag, and Barbara answered, "They stand for Swiss Family Robinson box; you've read that book, haven't you, Ned?"

"Of course," said Ned scornfully; "everybody has."

"Well, you remember the bag the mother had, out of which she pulled everything they wanted."

"Yes."

"Well, mother has a box something like

that, and she took out of it the candle and matches we had last night; she would n't let me see what was in it."

"I had to have a box," said his mother, "partly because a bag would be crushed in packing this way, and partly because I wanted to lock it so that its treasures should not be overhauled at once," with a smile at Barbara, who blushed.

"That was very clever of you, wife," said Mr. Brainard.

Mrs. Brainard, who had now found the box, took a key from her pocket and opened it.

Barbara and Ned crowded around, but she laughingly shielded it so that they could not look in, while she drew out what appeared to be several printed pages of a magazine. Then she locked the box and returned the key to her pocket.

"Speaking of stories —" she said, "reminded me that I had prepared, for such a catastrophe as this storm, a story which I will read if the company desire."

"Oh, do!" cried Barbara and Ned in a

breath, and Mr. Brainard left the window and seated himself to listen.

Mrs. Brainard began, "This is a Thanksgiving story—"

"Oh! oh!" cried Barbara and Ned, while their father laughed.

"And it begins in the poorhouse—" went on Mrs. Brainard calmly.

"Now, mother!" protested Barbara; while Ned added, "Aren't we dismal enough here without taking us into such a place?"

Mrs. Brainard did not reply, but quietly began to read: "Thanksgiving Cottage."

Her story was a long one, — of a woman, who, from being an inmate of a poorhouse, came — on a certain Thanksgiving Day — to have a home and a cottage of her own.

When the story was ended, Barbara, with shining eyes, and the air of having made a discovery, exclaimed, almost tragically, "Mother, did *you* write that story?"

"No, my dear," said her mother, smiling; "my daughter is the only story-maker in the family."

Barbara blushed, and Ned looked on with interest. "What do you mean, mother? does sis write stories?"

"Not yet, perhaps," said his mother, "but I think she will some day."

"Good for you, sis!" said Ned warmly; "but who did write the story, then?"

"It was written by one of my friends and published in a magazine a good many years ago, and I happen to know it was true."

Mr. Brainard, who had resumed his watching of the clouds, now announced cheerfully that the rain was nearly over, and they would soon be able to resume their journey.

"Wife," said Mr. Brainard, when at last they had really started on their way, leaving their hosts smiling on the steps, "what do you suppose our good old Dutchman charged for our entertainment?"

"What did he?" asked she, with interest.

"Twenty-five cents for each of us four, and ten cents for each horse."

"You don't mean — " said Mrs. Brainard,

astonished,—"you don't really mean twenty-five cents for supper, bed, and breakfast!"

"I do, indeed!" was the answer; "and he would n't take more, though I offered it, for I was ashamed to give him so little."

"Well, I think that was enough!" said Barbara hotly; "such a place! and such things to eat!"

"So do I, sis," said Ned.

"I hope we shall not find any worse place than that," said the mother. "It was at least clean, and we were welcome."

"How soon do you think we shall get to Buffalo, father?" asked Barbara, who was anxious to get that new bonnet before meeting anybody.

"Sometime this afternoon, I hope, if the roads are tolerable."

At Buffalo they were to take a steamer around the lakes, and let the horses as well as themselves have a rest, and Barbara knew they would meet nice people on the boat; hence her anxiety.

CHAPTER XXVIII

CAMPING OUT

LATE in the afternoon the little party reached Buffalo, and after leaving the family and horses at a hotel, Mr. Brainard went to see about the steamer. He found that it would not start until the next evening, so they took rooms at the hotel for the night.

"Now, sis," said Ned, as soon as they were settled, "let 's go after that bonnet."

"Oh, I can't go out with this thing on my head," said Barbara, almost in tears.

"But I don't know how to pick out a bonnet," said Ned, "and besides, I 'm afraid to go into a bonnet shop alone!" he added, with a quizzical look.

"Mother, you go!" coaxed Barbara.

"Oh, yes," said Ned, "that 'll do nicely."

Mrs. Brainard paused in the act of taking off her bonnet. "Perhaps that will be best," she said, starting off at once with Ned.

"Be sure you get blue ribbons," was Barbara's last charge, as they left the room.

The trip around the lakes was without special interest; Barbara, with her pretty new bonnet, which happened to just suit her, was happy, and enjoyed every minute.

One bright morning they arrived at Chicago, and very different it was from the Chicago of to-day. The oldest resident would hardly recognize it, though he might remember it.

The first thing our travelers noticed was old Fort Dearborn, standing near where they landed from the steamer. It had been made in Indian times, and looked like the pictures one sees of block forts, the upper part projecting over the lower, so that the doors could be defended. Ned and Barbara examined this with great interest.

When the horses and carriage were safely landed, the party started up toward the Tremont House, where they were to stay while in Chicago.

"Oh, what a funny street!" cried Bar-

bara, as they turned into the main thoroughfare.

The street was paved — if one may call it so — with planks across its whole width, and the sidewalks, of planks also, were two or three feet higher than the bed of the roadway, with a flight of steps at each crossing. Between the roadway and the sidewalk it was boarded up, so that the street looked like a long, narrow wooden box.

As they drove along they saw the reason for this peculiar arrangement, for under the feet of the horses as well as under the wheels, water spurted up between the planks, which bent with their weight. It was plain that but for the planks the street would be all under water and impassable.

When they reached the Tremont House, they were surprised to see it standing up on stilts; for it was being raised — lifted bodily out of the mud by hundreds of screws. As they drew up before the door, Barbara cried out, —

"Oh, father! you aren't going to stop here!"

"Yes, my dear," said her father.

"But it must be very dangerous!" she went on anxiously; "suppose it should fall!"

"How could it fall with all those screws holding it up? Don't be foolish, daughter! Don't you suppose they 'll take care to make it safe?"

Barbara said no more, but she did not like it, and with fear and trembling climbed the temporary steps that led to the door.

When the carriage appeared at the door the next morning, to continue their journey, Barbara noticed more baggage on the back; a great bundle, bigger than the traveling bags, was strapped on behind them, and two pails were hung below.

"Why, father!" exclaimed Barbara, in surprise.

Her father smiled. "I 'll tell you all about it when we get off," he said.

When they had left the city and were speeding over the pleasant prairie roads, the horses evidently glad to be on the earth after their lake journey, and all the family happy also,

Mr. Brainard turned to the two on the back seat and said, —

"I had some talk with a man on the steamer who had just come over this road, and he told me there had been heavy rains lately, so we might find it slow traveling; and as there were long distances between towns, he advised me to be prepared to camp out if necessary."

"Camp out! won't that be fun!" cried Barbara, delighted.

"Sure it will!" said Ned, looking around; "greatest fun going!"

Mrs. Brainard was not so elated; she looked concerned at the prospect.

"What did you bring?" asked Barbara excitedly. "I hope a kettle to hang over our fire — and a tent — and — "

"No, indeed!" interrupted her father, "I did not prepare for days and nights of camping, — only, possibly, for one night; and I brought only what will be indispensable, — some blankets for us, and feed for the horses. I hope we shall not be obliged to use them," he went on.

"These great desolate prairies," said Mrs.

Brainard, "are dreary enough; are there no wild animals to disturb us?"

"I think not," said Mr. Brainard; "possibly a prairie wolf or two, but they are easily scared off."

"Shall we have a fire?" asked Barbara eagerly.

"Of course," said her father. "Who ever heard of camping without a fire? We must look out for some trees or brush, if we have to stop."

Barbara's idea of camping was taken from stories she had read, of jolly parties around a big fire, much talk and fun, and very little sleep; and all day she was hoping for bad roads or an over-full river, which would oblige them to stop for the night.

But the roads were good and they came to no stream, but drew up just at dusk to a comfortable-looking little inn, where they stopped, greatly to the relief of Barbara's mother, who did not share her enthusiasm about camping.

The next day, however, things were a little more promising for Barbara's hopes. The

roads were heavy from late rains, and their progress was slow, so that it was some time after noon before they reached a farmhouse where they could get dinner. The farmer told a rather discouraging story about the roads farther west, and especially about the flood in the river they would have to cross. The bridge, he had heard, was gone; but there was a ford, if the water was n't too high. Barbara's eyes sparkled as she listened, and her father asked about inns or farmhouses where they could stop on the way.

Mrs. Brainard said nothing, but she had a long interview in the pantry with the farmer's wife, while the rest were gathered around the great fireplace in the kitchen; and after dinner, when the horses were brought to the door, Barbara saw the farmer slip a large package under the back seat. In her excitement, however, listening to the farmer's last directions about the road, she forgot it, and did not think of it again.

As they went on they found that their host had not said too much about the roads. It

grew steadily worse from the moment they left his fences behind. There were deep ruts in which the wheels almost stuck; holes in the stiffened mud, in which the feet of the horses slipped and nearly threw them down; now and then a puddle stretched across the way from one side to the other, into which the horses seemed afraid to venture, and which indeed looked as if it might be very deep.

Worst of all were the frequent holes, into which one wheel would slip up to the hub and threaten to upset the carriage. Through all this the horses went floundering, often just saving themselves from a fall, while the carriage lunged this way and that, one moment throwing the passengers in a heap towards the front, and the next dashing their heads against the side.

Ned had left the carriage at the beginning of trouble, and was plodding along beside the road, picking his way with great difficulty through the mud. Barbara begged to be allowed to walk, too, and even Mrs. Brainard wanted to relieve the carriage of her weight,

although there was no sign of a path or even of a dry place to be seen.

Mr. Brainard would not consent to this. "Look at Ned," he said; "even he finds it very hard; how could you two get along in your light shoes and dresses? No; we must do the best we can, and hope it will not last very long."

It did last, however, — so long that it was nearly dark when they reached the river they had to cross, and found no bridge and the usually meek little stream a roaring torrent.

"It is plain we cannot cross to-night," said Mr. Brainard. "We are fortunate in having a little clump of trees and bushes here. I think, daughter, you 'll have a chance to try camping out."

"Do you, father?" said Barbara rather ruefully; "but this isn't a nice place — so bare and open!"

"What did you expect?" asked her father.

"Oh, woods; thick trees and bushes to hide us a little."

"Well, we 'll have to take it as we find it,"

said her father; "the worst thing is we have n't anything to eat, and I suppose you youngsters are half starved."

Barbara's face fell, and Ned made up a wry mouth.

"Mother," said Barbara, "where's the magic box — the S. F. R. box, out of which is to come everything?"

"I shall produce it all in good time," said her mother, "when you get a good fire going."

Ned and Barbara hurried off to the bushes to cut and break branches, while Mr. Brainard, having driven a little one side out of the road, unhitched and partly unharnessed the weary horses, and placed before each a pail containing his food. Bob and Bill looked almost as much surprised to discover their usual supper in this unusual place as was Mrs. Brainard, who said, —

"I 'm so glad you thought of their comfort — poor fellows! they have had a hard day!"

"Yes," said Mr. Brainard, "it is far better for us to go hungry than for them, though I 'm sorry I did forget about luncheon for us."

Mrs. Brainard smiled, and just then Barbara came up and announced with triumph, —

"Now, Mrs. S. F. R., we have the fire started — produce your magic box!"

"You 'll find it under the back seat," said her mother quietly.

Barbara looked for a minute as if she feared her mother had lost her wits; then in a flash she remembered the farmer and the package, and rushing to the carriage, she pulled out the package, and brought it to her mother, while they all gathered close around the fire.

It was soon opened and spread out on a newspaper: several slices of cold boiled ham, a small pan of baked beans, half a loaf of bread, and — "Oh, jolly!" cried Ned — a dozen real home-made doughnuts.

"Truly, mother, you are a witch!" cried Ned with mouth full of bread. "Did it occur to you, Madam S. F. R., that we 're not used to eating beans with our fingers?"

"It did, my son," she answered with a merry gleam in her eye. "Get out the box and we 'll see what we can find!"

Soon the magic box was in her hands, and opening it she drew out a small package which proved to be four teaspoons.

"Well, by jingo!" exclaimed Ned. "You surely must be a witch, mother."

On pieces of newspaper for plates the meal was served, and all ate heartily, for the hard ride had sharpened their appetites.

"You don't happen to have a silver goblet or two secreted about you, Madam Witch?" said Ned when he had finished his supper. "I should like a drink from that flowing bowl out there," pointing to the raging river.

"Well, no; but let's search the box again."

"They must be of India-rubber if they're in there," said Ned, and his eyes opened wide as she took out a small bunch of rings, which, being stretched out, became a silver cup. Ned seized it with glee, ran down to the stream, and returned bearing it full to the brim.

"First drink to you, mother S. F. R.," he cried gallantly.

When they had finished their picnic meal, Ned brought out the bundle of blankets, and

they began to think of bed. All this time Barbara had been very still, and Ned observed that she glanced around behind her now and then.

"Don't find it so jolly as you expected, sis?' he began.

"It 's so awfully lonely," said Barbara, shuddering and glancing around.

"It mostly is lonely at night out in the open," said Ned. "I hope there are no bears around here," he added wickedly.

"Oh, Ned!" Barbara cried, jumping to her feet.

"Ned!" said his father reprovingly, "don't tease your sister. I told you, daughter" — turning to her — "that there are no wild animals in this part of the country, except perhaps a few coyotes, and they won't come near a fire."

Just then there was a rustling sound, and a loud "Whoo-o-o!" almost over their heads.

Barbara screamed.

"An owl, by jingo!" cried Ned; "if I only had a gun! Father, did n't you bring a pistol?"

"I did; but I shall not let you have it. Why should you shoot a harmless owl?"

"Because he frightens my little sister," said Ned demurely.

"No," said Barbara, ashamed of her fright, "don't hurt him! I might have known what it was; but I never heard that kind; around Uncle Karl's we had screech owls, and I love to hear them."

While this was going on, a level place close to the fire had been selected, a few branches spread down to keep the blankets from the bare ground, and Mrs. Brainard and Barbara invited to take each a blanket to wrap herself in, while Ned and his father prepared more wood to keep the fire going.

"Ned and I'll take turns in watching and keeping up the fire," said Mr. Brainard, "you two try to get some sleep."

"I shall take my turn too," said Mrs. Brainard.

"And I too," said Barbara rather feebly, for she shuddered at the thought of sitting up there in the black night alone.

The father and mother exchanged glances, for it had not escaped their notice that Barbara was n't so enthusiastic about camping out as she had been in the morning and by daylight.

"I'll take the first watch if you don't mind," said Ned. "I'm used to sitting up late, and shall not be sleepy for some time."

So it was settled; the father and mother and Barbara, wrapped in blankets, looking like so many mummies, stretched themselves on the blanket beds and were quiet, but not asleep. Barbara, crowded close to her mother, lay listening — hearing strange rustling and other sounds. Once some feathery object — perhaps the owl whose cry had startled her — swept over her so near that his wings fanned her, and in a moment she heard the death squeak of a mouse close by her. Then she heard stealthy footsteps, and suddenly Ned, snatching a blazing stick from the fire, flung it far off, and the steps ran.

CHAPTER XXIX

A NIGHT SCARE

SLEEP did not come readily to the campers, and they had not been long lying down when they heard the far-off sound of wheels. Nearer and nearer they came. Mr. Brainard was up, listening and trying to see what was coming along the dark road.

"It's a heavy team," said Ned in a low tone.

"Who can be traveling this dark night?" said Mr. Brainard.

In a few moments it came in sight, a "prairie schooner," — a big, white-covered lumber wagon in which immigrants cross the plains or move from one place to another, with all their family possessions, from the great chests they brought from the "old country" down to the latest baby.

The big clumsy wagon was drawn by a pair of tired-looking mules, and a man walked

beside them. Near the fire he halted his team, and now appeared, on the front seat, a girl younger than Barbara. She jumped down as the mules stopped, and with the man came to the fire. Mr. Brainard was standing to meet them, and now Barbara and her mother were both sitting up.

"Wall, stranger," said the newcomer with strong "down-East" twang, "you du seem tol'ble comf't'ble here."

"It's a strange hour to be traveling, friend," said Mr. Brainard.

"So it is — so it is!" said the man good-naturedly, warming his hands at the fire, "an' I sh'd 'a' camped a piece back — soon 's I got out o' that dod-darndist bit o' road I ever come acrost — only Liddy here — she seen your fire an' wanted to come on; an' it is more sociable-like to be near folks in this lonesome country. Say, stranger —" with new interest — "did you ford them pot-holes back there 'n' not break anything?"

"Yes," said Mr. Brainard, "we got through safely."

"Wall, if you don't object we 'll stop right here alongside; I'll help keep up the fire. It 's kinder lonesome for Liddy off alone. Liddy 'n' me 's all 'ts left now to take care o' the children —ma she died back there in Pennsylvany a spell back."

"Children!" cried Mrs. Brainard, now rising to her feet, "have you children here?"

"Four on 'em, ma'am," said the man, "all asleep in the wagon."

"My goodness!" said Mrs. Brainard. "You poor child!" turning to the girl, who stood by the fire, staring wide-eyed at the group, "you have the care of four children? Why, you 're only a child yourself!"

"Liddy 's quite a little woman," broke in the man, while the girl said meekly, "I 'm all they has, ma'am, — 'n I does the best I can."

"No doubt you do," said Mrs. Brainard. "Will you come and sit by the fire? Here's my daughter, not much older than you."

The two girls looked at each other, but Lydia said quietly, "Thank you, ma'am, but I must get into the wagon with the children."

"Do you all sleep in the wagon?" asked Mrs. Brainard, amazed.

"All but pa," said Lydia, — "he stays by the mules."

"Have you had your supper?" asked Mrs. Brainard, much interested in the little mother, so much a child, yet so womanly.

"Oh, yes, ma'am! we had it 'way back before the children went to bed," was her reply, as she turned to go to the wagon.

"Well," said Mrs. Brainard, as the man came back from taking care of his mules, "we 'll see more of you in the morning," and she wrapped herself again in her blanket and lay down.

Ned too flung himself onto his blankets, but the two men sat by the fire talking in low tones for some time. At last all except Mr. Brainard, whose watch it was, were lying down and at least trying to sleep.

For a long time everything was still except the crackling of the fire, and Mr. Brainard himself was nodding, when a gentle patter like soft footsteps began to make itself heard by

those who were awake. Mrs. Brainard sat up, but her husband, now wide awake, motioned her to be silent.

Nearer came the sound; it was evidently made by soft footsteps, and as he listened Mr. Brainard thought there were many of them. "A pack of coyotes," he thought; "a firebrand will scare them." He carefully selected from the fire a suitable stick all blazing at one end, and when they seemed quite near, he hurled it far off in the direction of the sound. There was a cry and a scamper, and he smiled to think how easily he had routed them. Mrs. Brainard lay down again.

In a moment there arose from the opposite direction long, quavering cries, sounds to chill one's blood, and so loud that instantly every one was up. It seemed to be from a hundred throats.

"Oh, what's that?" cried Barbara and her mother in the same breath.

"Only coyotes, I think," said Mr. Brainard, to quiet them, though in his heart he had doubts, especially as the horses showed uneas-

iness, snorting and prancing around, apparently trying to get away. He rose to go to them, to quiet them, and found the Pennsylvania man at his side.

"Them 's no kiotys," he whispered. "Got a gun, mister? We won't scare the women if we can help it, but we 'd best be ready."

"I have a pistol," said Mr. Brainard. "What do you suppose they are?"

"Them 's mountain lions — or I lose my guess — 'r maybe wildcats."

"I understood," said Mr. Brainard, "we had only coyotes to fear."

The man shrugged his shoulders. "Much they knows back there, snug in their own houses, what 's prowling round in the night! Now I 've got a good gun, an' I guess with your toy shooter we can give 'em all they want." So saying, he threw a pile of the branches he had been gathering onto the fire. "We 'd best have a good light; fire 's about the only thing they 're afeared on!" he went on.

By this time Barbara and her mother and

Lydia from the wagon were standing by the men, terrified almost out of their wits. Ned had armed himself with the stoutest stick he could find in the pile of branches they had brought for the fire, and there the little band stood, waiting, while the horses and mules were making a great commotion.

Soon the watchers could see dark forms — a thousand of them, as it seemed — drawing near.

"Wait till we can see their eyes," said Mr. Brainard, "and, Ned, you pull out some fire-brands; when I give the word all together let fly at them, shouting at the same time."

Ned did as his father said, and Barbara joined him, pulling out two blazing brands, one for each hand, and Lydia, who had crept up quite near, did the same.

Nearer and nearer came the enemy, till the men could see the gleam of eyes. Then the animals — whatever they were — came a little slower, plainly did not like fire.

Then Mr. Brainard shouted, —

"Fire all!"

Instantly followed two shots and six burning brands hurled wildly towards the advancing party, while savage yells from six vigorous throats filled the air with hideous din.

This was too much! No animal could stand such an attack! With cries of rage the band wheeled and fled, and the little party of travelers burst into an irrepressible laugh at the total rout of the foe.

They returned to their blankets and their fire, but there was not much sleep for them. The two men reloaded their weapons and replenished the fire, but they sat beside it and talked the rest of the night.

CHAPTER XXX

FORDING THE RIVER

"WELL, daughter," said Barbara's father, when she rose from her hard bed, and threw off her blanket just as the sun was rising, "how do you like camping out?"

"Not a bit!" she said emphatically. "I've had enough to last all my life."

"Well, the next thing is to get across this river," said he laughing.

"First," said Mrs. Brainard, "we better eat what we have left over, by way of breakfast. See —" she added in lower tone, "our neighbors are already up and doing."

Barbara looked over to where stood the wagon of their fellow travelers; a small fire was burning, and over it hung a kettle held by two forked stakes with a stick across them. Around it on the ground sat four poorly clad children, while Lydia was filling their bowls from the kettle. The father was harnessing

his mules, and evidently preparing for an early start.

"We better follow his example," said Mr. Brainard, "so that we can help each other across the ford — if help is needed."

Accordingly they hurriedly ate what was left of the night's luncheon, and Ned and his father brought the horses, while Barbara and her mother rolled up the blankets.

"We must see that the fire is all out," said Mrs. Brainard, "we don't want to start a fire among these bushes."

A pail of water from the river finished the last sparks of the fire, and before the sun was far on his way overhead the two teams were ready to attempt the dangerous-looking ford.

"I believe," said Ned to his father, "we must have killed something last night; I guess I'll go and see."

"Well, go," said his father; "we're not quite ready to start."

Ned ran off in the direction of the affray. He was gone some time, and returned with a queer look on his face. His father looked his

question and Ned — as he hurried past him to take his place in the carriage — whispered only one word, —

"Coyotes."

The rest of the party had decided that the foe could only be mountain lions, and he let them remain in their delusion.

The two teams were soon at the ford. The water had gone down a good deal, and Mr. Brainard thought it would be safe, though of course he did not know how deep it was. At any rate it must be passed, so he started his horses down the bank.

"If the water comes up into the box," he said to his wife, "you and Barbara get up on the seat so as not to wet your feet."

"Oh dear! I hope it won't," said Mrs. Brainard, "for that will wet our baggage on the rack."

Bob and Bill did n't much like wading into this rapidly running water, and they hesitated on the brink, looking very much as if they meant to turn around and go the other way. Then Ned sprang out and ran to their heads.

"I'll lead them, father," he said, "and if I go ahead we shall see how deep it is, and if it is safe."

"But, Ned!" cried his mother, "you 'll get wet!"

"I'm afraid I shall," said Ned, laughing, "one generally does in the water."

"And you may be swept away," she went on anxiously, "it runs so fast."

"I can swim, mother," he said. "Don't worry."

"Hold fast to the horses if you 're swept off your feet, my boy," called Mr. Brainard, "they can swim, you know."

They went on slowly, Barbara and her mother looking on fearfully as Ned sank deeper and deeper into the stream; up to his knees — up to his waist — but there it stopped and began to lower. They had been so absorbed in their anxiety for him that they had not noticed that the water had come into the carriage box, and their feet and the lower part of their clothes were soaking. When they drew up safely on the other side they stopped

to see if the other team made the trip safely. It followed close behind them, and all were relieved when it came up beside them on dry land.

Two roads led from this point, and the emigrant said, "I guess we part company here; I 'm going to the south, and this is my road," pointing to the left-hand one.

"Then we do part here," said Mr. Brainard, "for my road is straight ahead."

Good-byes were exchanged, and the mule team with its load of children and their little mother passed out of sight.

"Now," said Mr. Brainard, when Ned started running on ahead, saying he would dry himself so, "there 's an inn not very far from here. We must hurry to get there and dry ourselves."

The horses were urged, and within an hour the travelers were comfortably warming themselves before a rousing fire at the Rock River Tavern.

On this side of the river the roads were much better, and after a few hours spent in

getting dry and eating an early dinner they set off for a farmhouse where they hoped to spend the night.

As they drew up before the side door of a neat-looking farmhouse they were greeted from the step by a short, slim little woman with a very bright face and cheery voice, in the accents of "down East."

"Wall, now, I'm real glad to see you! Get right out and come in by the fire! you look clean tuckered out, missis."

Such a warm welcome was in itself comforting, and the looks and manner of the hostess added to the cheer.

In five minutes Barbara and her mother were seated in the warmest corner of the great open fireplace, while Mr. Brainard and Ned were helping their host to make the horses as comfortable as themselves. This was the kind of place to make one glad he had come.

"Can you keep us all night and to breakfast?" asked Mrs. Brainard.

"To be sure!" said the woman, bustling in and out of the pantry; "I've only got two

beds; but I can make up the lounge for missy."

"Two beds will do well enough," said Mrs. Brainard; "my daughter will sleep with me."

"Wall, then, I can fix you up snug as a bug in a rug," said their hostess, "'n' as for breakfast! my sakes! I could feed forty like you!" and with a hearty laugh she pulled out a table and began to set it for supper.

"Is there anything special you'd like for supper?" she asked.

"What can you give us?" asked Mrs. Brainard.

"Wall, hot biscuits and butter 'n' a first-rate dish o' hash I had fixed for breakfast — but I c'n make something else for breakfast — 'n' tea 'n' doughnuts 'n' cake 'n' apple-sass 'n' —"

"There! there!" interrupted Mrs. Brainard, "that's enough in all conscience! We shall be well satisfied with what you have mentioned."

Never was such a bustling little housekeeper; in about five minutes she had scrambled her

flour and things together, and slapped a pan of biscuits into a tin oven before the fire. In two minutes more a dish of most appetizing-looking hash was throwing out delicious odors from a "bake-kettle" on the hearth, and running back and forth between pantry, fireplace, and table was the cheery little hostess, keeping up all the time a pleasant chatter as brisk as herself.

It was certainly less than thirty minutes after they came in when they sat down to a homely but tempting meal. Even fastidious Barbara, who had learned at boarding school to despise "hash" — even she sent back her plate for a second helping. As for Ned, he declared he had n't eaten anything so good as that hash and doughnuts since he left home in knee-breeches for his first school.

Breakfast, to which the little woman could give more time, was a most elaborate meal. In addition to the usual breakfast dishes of cereal, meat and potatoes, hot bread, and doughnuts and coffee, were four kinds of cake, — two kinds made fresh that morning, — apple and

mince pie, four kinds of preserves, and various other things.

It was the sort of bill of fare most delectable to the youthful appetite, and though I hesitate to say that Barbara tasted every kind of cake and pie and preserve, I 'm sure she paid little attention to the more solid articles their host piled upon her plate.

"I 'd like to stay here a week," she whispered to her mother, as they left the table.

"No doubt you would," said her mother with a smile, "but I fear it would n't be good for your health. Our little hostess is far too generous a provider."

"I 'm downright sorry to see you go," said the farmer's wife, as the carriage came up in the morning. "I du get so lonesome out here on the prairie, 'n' it 's good for sore eyes to see such a pleasant party as you. I du hope you 'll come this way again."

"If we do," said Mr. Brainard heartily, "we 'll be sure to stop over with you."

"So do! so do!" said the farmer, as the horses started off.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE "STAR"

THE far Western town where this pleasant family journey came to an end was a village of hard-working people with apparently no thoughts above their daily labors. The misrepresentation which had induced Mr. Brainard to bring his family to this place, expecting to make it their permanent home, need not be told here. It is enough to say that Barbara and Ned found themselves very lonely. Barbara, indeed, began to feel very homesick for her old life and circle of friends, when a new interest opened before her.

Ned — having, as I said, finished his education — was hesitating about choosing a profession, when circumstances, as they often do, decided it for him.

In this backwoods village was one newspaper, a weekly of the regular country newspa-

per type. Into the office of that paper, and acquaintance with its genial editor, Ned, with nothing to do, soon drifted. To help his new friend, the rather overworked editor, as well as to amuse himself in the dull country town, he learned the art of typesetting and printing, and generally getting up a newspaper.

At the same time Barbara, feeling the keenest interest in everything connected with the press, began to write little items which she sent in anonymously, and was always pleased to see in the next issue of the paper.

All this work which the brother and sister did for their own amusement proved to be really a training for a position in which they found themselves a few weeks later. The owner and editor of the "Weekly Star" (let us call it) received one day an offer of a desirable connection in one of the two large cities of the state, and was anxious to accept it. To get his little paper off his hands without really stopping it before the year was out, he offered to sell it to Ned, with the use of the type and press, and all things necessary to print the

paper till the end of the year, for which the subscribers had paid.

Ned considered this offer with hesitation, for, being a new hand, he feared he could not manage the whole business of editor, compositor, proofreader, press-worker, and office boy, as the present editor had done.

But when Barbara heard his talk about it, she at once fired up. "Oh, Ned!" she cried with sparkling eyes, "Do it! do it! I'll help you!"

"What can you do, sis," said Ned, "except write sharp little items?"

"Oh, I can learn to set type," said Barbara. "I know I can — it is n't so very hard — and I should *love* to do it! I have nothing to do; Oh, do let me!"

"That might do," said her father, considering. "Barbara has plenty of grit, and she's always mussing with ink — look at her fingers now."

Sure enough; on the treacherous middle finger of her right hand was an ink spot, which, in her haste to fill her pen, Barbara generally wore to show what she had been doing.

Barbara blushed and laughed.

"Well, sis, if you 'll promise to stand by me and learn to set type like any apprentice, I think I 'll try it; it will at least help to pass away the time in this dull town; but you must n't back out when you find it hard, or tiresome."

"Back out!" said Barbara scornfully. "Do I ever back out of a promise, mother?" turning to that lady, who was listening with interest to the talk. Remembering with a pang Barbara's experience with the paper basket — so long ago now — which so nearly had a disastrous ending, Mrs. Brainard said emphatically, "Indeed, Ned, I am sure you can trust Barbara to keep her promise, and more too, and she 'll take to printer's ink like a duck to water; she always was daft over any kind of ink."

With this endorsement Ned quickly decided to take the paper, and the very next morning work began.

Dressed in her warmest gown, for winter had already arrived — and winter in Minne-

sota is no joke—and protected by one of her mother's big aprons from the printers' ink in which she hoped to revel, Barbara betook herself directly after breakfast to the office of the "Weekly Star," feeling several inches taller, and many years older, than she did the day before.

The office, composing-room, and everything else of this unique newspaper was in one large room in the basement of the village hotel, in which the family had taken board for the winter. The room was intended for a store, the whole front being occupied by two large show windows and a double glass door.

Having, however, missed its vocation as a store, it had been a general receptacle for all the rubbish and odds and ends of the hotel above. Also its windows had been a target for idle boys, and more than half the panes of glass were broken or missing altogether. To keep from freezing to death the editor had closed these openings to the sharp Minnesota air by newspapers pasted over, or old clothes stuffed in, so that the front presented a dis-

reputable appearance, looking, indeed, like a rag shop or something worse.

Inside it was even less attractive; the rubbish mentioned had been hastily shoved to the back, to make room for the two cases of type to be set up near the windows, but it still stood there in all its ugliness.

The stove occupied the place of honor near the type cases, while the pipe, which ran the whole length of the room, was shakingly held in place by numerous rusty wires, and disappeared into a hole near the ceiling. This piece of furniture, on which their lives depended, was a big structure standing on three legs and a pile of bricks, and plainly had not been blacked for ages — if ever. It had a large square door in front, with a capacity of great logs of wood.

It had the capacity — as I said — and the will to dispose of them; all that was lacking was proper fuel. Not a stick of dry wood could be bought in that town at the beginning of a Minnesota winter. Every family had taken care to provide itself with this necessity

of life, but no one had a stick to sell. Neither money nor entreaties was able to secure anything to feed that devouring monster, which was expected to keep the lifeblood flowing in the veins of the new editor and his assistant,—anything, at least, that was prepared to burn. Green wood they could buy, and that they had to put up with, with the result that more than half the time of the two shivering workers had to be passed in coaxing the wood to render up its heat; and never once in the varied experiences of that winter was that barn of a room really warm.

The brother and sister prepared for their daily labors by putting on all the wraps they possessed. Ned worked in heavy overcoat, long leggings, thick woolen gloves with the tips of the fingers cut off; and Barbara wrapped herself in every jacket and cloak she had, with fur-lined overshoes, and gloves cut like her brother's. Thus equipped, looking like a pair of Arctic explorers, they went—laughing at their own grotesque appearance—to their dreary office, to their daily task of setting type.

Barbara soon grew expert at the work, for she loved it. To see the words she had written grow into print in the little "composing stick" in her hand, and then take their place in the long column that was to appear in the "Star," was a constant delight to her. After the work of the day was over, and she went to her little room in the hotel above, she busied herself in writing sketches, editorials, magazine reviews, and so forth, to fill the columns, leaving to her brother — who, lacking her enthusiasm, was usually too tired to work — only the political and other news to write. Often she had to go to bed to keep warm, for the hotel was not much better supplied with dry wood than the office. Even then she would wrap up her shoulders and arms, and sit up and write hours after every one else in the house had retired to the only place where he could be really warm — his bed.

CHAPTER XXXII

HAPPY AT LAST

In spite of the cold, the hard work, and the many discomforts, Barbara was now very happy, happier than she had ever been in her life. She had found the work that she loved, and — though you young folk won't believe it yet — that is the greatest happiness in life.

Her work, of course, was crude; no editor, except a brother hard pressed to fill his paper, would have published it; but she was learning — she improved. Seeing her own words in cold print showed her their faults, and she set herself eagerly to correct them. She read carefully other newspapers; she modeled her work upon the best of them, and before that winter was over she had acquired a very tolerable journalistic style.

There was a sort of intoxication about the situation in which these very young people found themselves. Finding a certain power in

their hands with no older head to hold back, they set out — after the manner of youth — to make the old world over in the old foolish way — by force.

Selecting the ordinary failings of human nature, especially as it shows in a small town with few outside interests, they attacked them with the eager enthusiasm of inexperience; sharp, caustic remarks and even serious reproof appeared in the saucy — one might say impertinent — "Star," which indeed changed from a heavenly object to a very earthly one.

Before long that sleepy village awoke; people began to open their eyes and to wag their tongues. The youthful editors did not know the people well enough to be personal had they desired to be so, but in attacking human nature in general they could not fail to hit some one, and every one so stung began to sting back. Gossip, which had come in for the hardest blows of the callow journal, was turned against them; strange stories began to be whispered about. The young editors were delighted. They were making a sensation;

they had escaped the fault of dullness — deadliest of faults in a newspaper.

In fact, the eager reformers were in a fair way to bring a hornet's nest about their ears, when a kind fate in the guise of a misfortune came in to protect them.

One morning in the early spring a thunderbolt fell upon the modest "Star." The old editor appeared in the office and announced that he had sold all the type and the press, and should have to take them away in two days.

Consternation fell upon the pair. The paper had three weeks more to run before the new owner could collect what was due for advertising, which he depended upon to pay him for his time and work.

This called for a council of war; the question to settle was: what shall be done?

That evening in family conclave the matter was discussed. After much talk and many suggestions, such as that the paper should be issued from the city nearest them, and so forth, the bright thought came to Barbara, who flashed out with, "I'll tell you, Ned, let's

run off the three numbers in the two days we have, and send them out at the proper time!"

"We might do that," said Ned eagerly, "if father will take Bill (the hired man) and run the press. We can cut it down to a half sheet. Keeping all the ads, and leaving out most of the literature" (with a roguish glance at Barbara), "you and I can keep up the matter, and I really believe we could do it."

"I'll give you my help," said their father, "though I never ran a press."

"That's easy to learn," said Ned, "and Bill has helped me, so he knows how."

So the thing was arranged; the next morning very early saw the work begun. The standing ads were rearranged in new, compact shape, all useless matter cut out, and only two or three columns left to be filled with fresh matter for each day.

Barbara hunted scraps of sketches from her desk, and wrote notices of the magazines which were due during those three weeks. Ned wrote leaders on general subjects which were always

timely, and both worked from dawn till long after dark at the composing cases, setting up these various productions, and, after they were printed, distributing the type to be used for the next issue, while the hand press steadily stamped them on the paper.

So by almost constant work all day and far into the night the work was finished; and three rolls of the diminished "Star"—one for each week — were hidden away in a room upstairs, and the weary but triumphant pair took some much-needed rest.

That was a small town, as I said, and after the manner of the people in small towns, every one knew his neighbor's business. There was much talk when the "office" of the "Star" was seen to depart, and many queries whether that luminary would appear again, and the advertisers should be asked to pay.

Much to their surprise, the next week saw the "Star" again on their counters and tables, with all its ads, and its sprightly spirits undiminished.

Wise heads assembled in the grocery, dis-

cussed the matter, and decided that it had been run off in a hurry before the office left, but one and all were sure it would not appear again.

What was their surprise on the next Wednesday to be greeted by the same old "Star," with new matter. Guesses were plenty, but no one hit upon the truth. The crowd at the grocery decided that it had been printed at St. Paul.

The third issue contained the valedictory of each of the two editors — for Barbara, by assuming the greater part of the original work, had been accorded that distinction by her grateful brother — and the "Star" set, to rise no more.

It had accomplished its work. It had decided the lifework of the two, for Ned found himself as much fascinated as Barbara with journalism, and had no further doubts as to a profession.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE END OF TROUBLES

When the little country newspaper drew its last breath, Barbara felt that she had made good her claim to make writing her profession. She had learned a great deal, and to her untrained sense her articles read very much like those she found in the best magazines and journals.

When her father learned that the Western move was a mistake, and the next spring moved bag and baggage back to civilization, Barbara, who was now much happier at home since Janet was no longer there, set herself seriously to begin what she felt was her life-work.

So many things she saw about her in the world that needed reforming: so many mistakes made, so many blunders, so much needless unhappiness. She was burning with desire to set them right; she was bursting with ad-

vice and help. She could see so plainly where the mistakes were made; how mothers failed in their duty to their children, wives to their husbands, teachers to their pupils. If the world would only listen!

Alas! the world did not seem to want to be set right; it preferred to go on in the old stupid, blundering way.

Earnestly, and with her whole heart in the work, Barbara sat in her quiet room and wrote, wrote, wrote. Essay after essay flowed from her pen, and, after due study and correction, in dainty yet business-like dress set out on its mission of helpfulness.

Alas! one after another, with marvelous unanimity, every essay returned to her.

What did this mean? had she not read in stories of the wonderful success of the first efforts of young writers; how their effusions met at once a generous response — with eager requests for more? Were they so much better than hers? Many essays that she read in magazines and papers read no better; some were even stupid, in her opinion.

But these unanimous returns! Had she indeed mistaken her vocation? Had the world no need of her? Her courage and her hopes sank to zero. She was beginning to feel that she had no place in the world, and life looked very black. If she could not write, she felt that she could not live; no other career but that of author had the least charm for her.

These were very dark days for Barbara, but into her gloom came at last a ray of light. It came from what one might think a chance conversation, if there were any such thing as chance.

Barbara, as I have many times said, was a devoted book-lover, and in her fresh grief and misery she turned to books more and more for comfort and consolation. Not far from her home was a small private circulating library, kept by a woman of much ability and experience. With this woman Barbara loved to talk, when she went for books, and from her lips fell the words that changed Barbara's life.

They were one day speaking of a mutual acquaintance who was trying to win a place

in the world of writers, but had met with no success.

"It is easy to see why she fails," said Mrs. Martin; "she writes nothing but her sentiments and opinions. What do people care for the sentiments of an unknown writer? The world is full of young scribblers who think it their business to make over the blundering old world; they crop out as plentiful as flowers in the spring."

Barbara was all eager attention now. Perhaps the wise old woman, who knew human nature, saw the hunger of her soul; at any rate she went on: —

"If she would only tell stories, now —"

Barbara shuddered: anybody could tell stories, she thought, — she could reel them off by the mile, — she would not condescend to write stories.

"Or," — went on her sharp-sighted friend, — "or tell the world something it does not know, or something it wants to know; some facts, told in a bright, fresh way. When she gets a name that the world will recognize,

then she can go into the reforming business; then her sentiments and ideas will have some weight."

With these wise words in her mind Barbara went home; the new thought had taken hold of her; she felt new life; perhaps that *was* the way to begin.

But what did she know to tell the world; Facts had not been in her thoughts; sentiments, feelings, had filled her mind.

Pondering deeply on these things, she reached home and went at once to her room to think it over. The book she had taken from the library was a bound volume of Household Words, and while she was searching her mind to find some bit of knowledge that she might offer that world which refused her sentiments, and so test her friend's wisdom, she was turning over the leaves carelessly. Suddenly her eyes fell upon something which attracted her. It was an account of a visit to some famous china works in England, and it gave, in a bright, simple way, the process through which every bit of china passed.

Barbara was so interested that she read it through, and then like a flash came the thought that changed the world for her.

Why not write this up? This is English; why not see how it is done in America and tell it for the children,—for her failures had made Barbara modest about instructing grown-ups.

The thought worked like wild-fire; she could not even wait to see how it was done in America; but, her mind filled with the interesting details of the English process, she seized her pencil and began her sketch. She was full of her subject, and she never paused till she had finished the article, and described the whole process of making a dainty bit of china, in language that was simple though not babyish.

When she had copied it and sent it to the Children's Department of a religious weekly that came regularly to the house, she set herself with grim courage to wait the usual return of the manuscript.

But it did not return; the very next num-

ber of the paper had her "Tale of a Teacup" in it, and in the mail came a letter — Oh, joy unspeakable! — with her first reward, a two-dollar bill!

The amount was nothing, but the promise for the future was everything. From that moment Barbara was the happiest girl on earth. She had found her work! she had proved that she could do it! She had not been mistaken in her instincts; she needed only time and experience to make her own place in the world of her love and longing.

It is needless to say that the wild enthusiasm of that hour of first success was not entirely fulfilled. Barbara did win a place for herself in the world of letters — a modest one, to be sure — but one that made her life happier.

The first little success was not followed by the triumphant career she pictured; articles came back, editors were not always eager as she pushed out into more ambitious fields; she met the usual failures, but she met also with many successes, enough to make the happiness

of a life which had many vicissitudes after the days of this book.

She learned also to have more respect for the story, and even sometimes to write one herself when one came to her so vividly that she could n't help it.

So we will leave her, a happy Barbara, with her lifework plain before her.

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